

Stuart Robertson, M.A.

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# *Balanced Burdens*

¶ Addresses to young people exceptionally good in themselves and full of suggestions and illustrations for other talks

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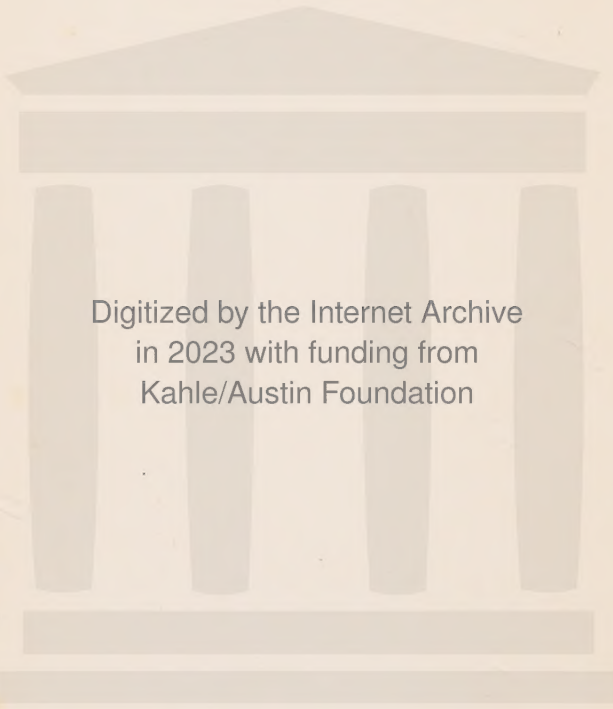
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WARWICK SQUARE, LONDON, E.C.4

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# BALANCED BURDENS



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# Balanced Burdens

by  
Stuart Robertson

HODDER AND STOUGHTON  
LIMITED LONDON

*Made and Printed in Great Britain by C. Tinling & Co., Ltd.,  
Liverpool, London, and Prescott.*



## CONTENTS

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	PAGE
BALANCED BURDENS . . . . .	9
THE MINISTER'S UMBRELLA . . . . .	15
SEEN FROM THE RIGHT SIDE . . . . .	20
THE PLASTER ON THE LOOKING-GLASS . . . . .	25
PASSING . . . . .	30
ON WHICH SIDE ? . . . . .	35
THE FOOT THAT STANDS . . . . .	40
BROADCASTING . . . . .	45
REFLECTIONS . . . . .	50
HOW TO PLAY THE GAME . . . . .	55
TO BE CONTINUED . . . . .	60
KNOCKING-OFF . . . . .	65
BLACK AND GOLD . . . . .	71
AT THE BOTTOM OF THE TUB . . . . .	76
SPOILED PALATES . . . . .	81
IN THE DARK ROOM . . . . .	87
R.S.V.P. . . . .	92
RESTS AND MUSIC . . . . .	98

	PAGE
LIVING WORDS . . . . .	102
GATHERING STICKS . . . . .	107
THE GREAT CIRCLES OF GOD . . . . .	114
THE COMPANIONS OF TRUTH . . . . .	119
THE BELT WRESTLERS . . . . .	124
THE LIVING WAY . . . . .	129
IN AN AQUARIUM . . . . .	134
THE INSPIRING TOUCH . . . . .	139
GUARDING THE CROWN . . . . .	145
GATHERING SHELLS . . . . .	150
TWO CLOCKS . . . . .	155
THE CONDITIONAL MOOD . . . . .	161
HOW A STAR WAS FOUND . . . . .	166
THE ACORN BARNACLE . . . . .	170
REFLECTING THE LIGHT . . . . .	175
THE GOOD SHEPHERD . . . . .	180
THE SHADOW OF SELF . . . . .	185
A CURIOUS CLOCK . . . . .	189
SEEKING AND FINDING . . . . .	194
WITH A MEASURING LINE . . . . .	201
ADORNING THE DOCTRINE . . . . .	207
THE SLEEPING HERO . . . . .	211

	PAGE
OUR UNSEEN SECOND . . . . .	216
LOST BEGINNINGS . . . . .	222
THE UNHEARD KNOCK . . . . .	227
GIVING GOD A CHANCE . . . . .	231
IN THE EYES OF LOVE . . . . .	235
THE PATH AND THE PIONEER . . . . .	240
HAVE YOU REMEMBERED THE SALT ? . . . . .	245
DAY-DREAMS . . . . .	250
SHUFFLING WITH CONSCIENCE . . . . .	255
A PAGE FOR GIRLS . . . . .	260
THE HELMET OF HECTOR . . . . .	265
LEARNING TO SAY " NO " TO ONESELF . . . . .	270
HELPFUL HINDRANCES . . . . .	275
THE-BOY-THAT-WAS-FULL-OF-HIMSELF . . . . .	281



## BALANCED BURDENS

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“ Bear ye one another’s burdens.”—*Galatians* vi. 2.

THERE is in India a tribe called Santals. I know a missionary who works among them, and he was lately telling me something about them.

They are a brave and very interesting people and have many curious ways. One of these is their way of carrying burdens. The women always carry their burdens on their head ; the men carry them on the shoulder, suspended from the two ends of a long pole. When word goes round that a baby is born in one of the houses, they ask, “ Does he carry on the head or on the shoulder ? ” which is their way of saying, “ Is it a girl or a boy ? ”

One day my friend was expecting a visitor, a brother missionary, and he sent a Santal to meet him and bring on his luggage. So the Santal took his carrying pole and set off.

At the station he found that the luggage consisted of one heavy bag. Now he couldn't divide that burden into two, as was his custom, and plainly he couldn't carry the bag hanging from one end of his carrying pole.

This is how he solved the problem. He looked about till he found a stone about the same weight as the bag, hung that from one end of the pole and the bag from the other, and walked proudly home with his double burden ! His easy way was to carry twice as much. He balanced the one burden with another, and carried the two when he only need have carried one.

It seems funny, even stupid, doesn't it ? Well, it may be funny, but it isn't stupid.

It is easier to carry two bags than one, *because they balance*. A one-sided load is a bigger strain than a balanced burden even if it be twice as much as the other.

A milk-maid with a yoke will walk more easily and more straightly carrying

two full milk pails than under the more awkward burden of one.

Double the burden, and though you double it you make it easier because you balance it.

And this is a good thing to remember for the burdens of life.

We have all got our own burdens, and it seems often as if that is enough to carry, but the Bible says, "Bear one another's burdens"—take another as well and balance your own. That is the *yoke of Christ*.

When Sir John Moore was retreating with his army to Corunna by terrible forced marches, many soldiers fell out by the wayside. Their strength gave out. Their legs couldn't carry them any further. One officer tells how he was quite exhausted and had decided to lie down where he was, whatever might befall him. He could do no more.

Now there were with the army many civilians fleeing before the French in fear. Just as the officer had decided to give in, he saw a poor dying woman with a baby.

She saw him, and, holding up her baby, implored him with her last breath to save it.

He took the child in his arms, and was able to carry on. This man, to whom he himself was a burden too heavy, found it possible to go on because he had added a new burden. One was too much, but two was not. He balanced the burden of self by the burden of somebody else, and found the double burden easier. "Two are better than one," says the Book of Proverbs.

Once Jesus was weary with the burden of His own tired and hungry body, and sat on a well-side near Samaria. There came to Him a poor woman with a sore burden on her heart. Jesus wasn't too tired to help her. He took her burden on Him and set Himself to lift it, and His own burden of weariness and hunger was lightened, so that when the disciples came back they thought somebody had given Him food.

It wasn't that at all. He had balanced His burden by the woman's, and it was



easier. That is the secret of Christ. That is why His yoke is easy and His burden is light.

There was a day when good men in the Church at home began to think about the heathen nations abroad, and they called on the Church to take up this new burden. People said: "We have enough to do at home. We can hardly carry the home burden. How can we add the burden of Foreign Missions?"

It wasn't brave, but it sounded sensible.

In the end the Church took up the new burden, and found it could carry the two better than it had been carrying the one; and now we can't think a Church is a Church unless it is carrying the balanced burden of Home and Foreign Missions. The one helps the other.

A selfish life is the hardest life of all. Its burdens are very hard to carry because they are not balanced by unselfish burdens.

The way to carry our own burdens more easily is to help to carry somebody else's.

That's why God gave us two hands, one

for our own burdens, and one for our neighbour's. "Look not on your own things, but *also* on the things of others." Balance the burden.

## THE MINISTER'S UMBRELLA

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“Thy pound which I have kept laid up in a napkin.”—  
*St. Luke* xix. 20.

WHEN one reads in St. Luke's Gospel about the man who kept his pound carefully and uselessly wrapt up in a napkin, one is tempted to wonder if any man could ever be so stupid. “Surely any one would have more sense,” you say. “This man is just a man in a parable.”

But you would be wrong, for I know a man who was just like that, and I want to tell you about him.

He was a minister, and one day, because he had married a couple, he got a present of an umbrella.

It was a very handsome umbrella, and *it was beautifully rolled up*. Its silk lay in the neatest and smoothest of folds, and he was very proud of these folds.

He kept it rolled up, and would not unroll it for anything, in case he could not

roll it up as neatly, if once he opened it.

When it was wet he took out another umbrella ; but this one he never took out if it was rainy or looked like rain.

It came out only on fine days, and he took a good look at the sky and tapped the barometer to make sure, before he took out this very special umbrella.

This went on for a long time ; and the umbrella was kept carefully folded in its original folds.

One day the weather promised fine, and the barometer gave no warning, and he took it out. But the weather didn't keep its promise. Up came the clouds and down came the rain in a regular downpour, and he was caught.

There was nothing for it but to unroll the umbrella at last.

But, alas ! when he did unroll it !

By being left so long in its folds, the silk had cut, and every fold split when he hoisted it. He could see the sky through every one of them, and the rain could see him and come in ; and it did.

He had *wasted it by saving it* more surely

than if he had used it. He had sacrificed its usefulness to its neatness. His friend gave it to him to use as an umbrella, and he used it only as a walking stick, and when he wanted to put it to its proper use it was useless. He was like the man in the parable.

Boys and girls, God gives us gifts *to be used*, and if they are kept to themselves they go bad.

It was not only money Jesus was speaking about, though it is true about money, but other things as well.

If your life is easy, it is that you may help to make life easier for others.

If God has given us the good news of Jesus Christ, it is not to hug it to ourselves, but that we may send it out into the world and give it to others. It is not only for our sake, but for the sake of others, and we must be His missionaries, by being, and giving, or going.

He once gave His truth to the Jews and told them it was for all nations ; but they kept it to themselves, and did not put it to the proper use it was meant for, and so

their religion went all to pieces, and they crucified Jesus.

God does not give us our wonderful soul to be kept safe and neatly folded like the umbrella. That is not goodness. Our soul is not just to be kept from evil ; it is to go out in the storm and be “ a shelter from the wind and a covert from the tempest ” ; not just a guarded ornament, but a useful thing and a helpful thing.

The man in the parable only thought of saving his pound, and he lost it.

My friend only thought of saving his umbrella, and he lost it.

And Jesus says, “ He that findeth his life shall lose it ; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.”

Long ago men thought that the only way to save their soul from sin was to run away from the world and become hermits living in caves, or monks endlessly singing psalms within four walls that shut out the world. But they were just like the carefully kept umbrella ; they wasted their souls, and the world which needed them was none the better for them.

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Boys and girls, religion means service ;  
worship means work ; being a Christian  
means going among men and doing something  
for Christ's sake.

## SEEN FROM THE RIGHT SIDE

---

“ It was a cloud and darkness to them ; but it gave light by night to those.”—*Exodus* xiv. 20.

WHEN Charles Dickens was a little, unhappy, neglected boy, working in a blacking factory, he tells he used to wander about the neighbourhood in his dinner-hour, looking at the London streets with wondering eyes that missed nothing.

In St. Martin's Lane there was a coffee-house he often used to go into ; and he tells how the first time he looked up from his chair he saw two words on this glass door that set him all a-tremble. He had not noticed them coming in.

The awful words were “ MOOR EEFFOC.” What did they mean ? His child's fancy went off on the wings of imagination. It was an eerie mystery. He knew what a Moor was. He had heard tell of Moors, black, mysterious, cruel ; and he fancied that behind the door was some terrible



Sultan ready to pounce out and order him to be beheaded, some ferocious Moor of Venice, like the one Shakespeare wrote about, waiting to smother him with a pillow.

He sat and stared at it fascinated and fearful, and forgetting to eat his lunch. His coffee was cold, but not so cold as his little heart was at the sight of that terrible writing on the door, "MOOR EEEFFOC."

Then at last he had to go : to pluck up his courage and pass through that dreadful door and face what lay behind it.

Well ! There was nothing at all. His fears had just been needless torments, pure imagination ; for when he looked back, the mysterious words simply read, "COFFEE ROOM."

He had been reading them backwards and on the wrong side !

Afterwards he would notice other strange names on doors. They were "TUO YAW," and "NI YAW." We have all seen them, and to me they always suggest two polite and smiling Chinamen.

But none of them would have any power

to waken the fears of little Charles Dickens. He had learned that there was nothing to be alarmed about. They were only words read backwards from the wrong side of the door. When you got on the right side they were all right.

Now this House of Life has many rooms in it, through which we have to pass—"And every chamber is a door."

"A door to something nobler, loftier walls and vaster floor"—but, sometimes we are scared by the writings on the door. It seems fearful and threatening, because we are on the wrong side and reading things backwards.

The Bible tells us of the fiery pillar which guided the people of Israel. It was a wonderful light to God's people; it was a dreadful darkness to the Egyptians. "It was a cloud of darkness to them; but it gave light by night to those." What made the difference was that "*those*" were on the right side of it.

When the disciples were looking forward at the Cross, it was a terrible thing. They couldn't bear to think of it. But when

they got to the other side, it was wonderful and beautiful, and they could talk of nothing else.

A poetess has written a poem called "Looking Back," which says the same thing.

" Rose purple and a silvery grey  
Is that cloud, the cloud which looked so black.  
Evening brightens all to-day,  
Looking back."

And another writes of that dark door which we call " Death," which at the last waits us all.

" The face of death is towards the sun of life,  
Its shadow darkens earth."

There is always another side to everything that happens to us, and when we get to that other side and look back we will see that which frightened us really spells out " God is Love," only we read it backwards and were afraid because we didn't understand.

This is just what Faith is for, to teach us to go bravely through the doors of the House of Life, as God calls us, sure that they hide nothing that can take us from His Love.

Just as "MOOR EEFROC" turned out to be only "COFFEE ROOM," so the doors which spell out "TRIAL," "DISAPPOINTMENT," "TEARS," "DUTY," "SORROW" and even "DEATH," when we get to the other side of them, will spell out to us "GOD IS LOVE."

## THE PLASTER ON THE LOOKING-GLASS

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I READ somewhere lately a story of a man who had a pain in his back which gave him a lot of trouble. So he sent for his doctor, who examined him and thumped him, made him draw deep breaths, and listened to him through funny tubes. Then he wrote out a prescription. It was for a plaster that he was to get and stick on the place where the pain was.

The man was very pleased and got the plaster. But his difficulty now was to get it on the right place. He had no one to put it on for him, and he was a shy man and not very handy himself.

So he thought, and hit on a brilliant idea. He fixed up two mirrors so that he could see his own back, and with great care applied the plaster.

After some days the doctor called to

see how he was getting on. To his surprise the pain was as bad as ever !

He re-read the prescription. That was all right : it couldn't be the fault of the plaster.

" Did you apply it to the right place ? " he asked.

" Yes," said the man, " I'm quite sure of that."

" Come up to the bedroom and let me see," said the doctor. And when he looked no wonder the pain was no better, for the plaster wasn't there at all !

Do you know where he had put it ? He had stuck it on the looking-glass !

I don't know whether it did the looking-glass any good : I doubt it. But I am sure it did him no good, for a plaster, however good it may be, is no use unless it is applied firmly and faithfully on the right place.

The Bible speaks of people who hear the word of Christ and don't do it. It says they are like a man who sees his face in a glass and then forgets what sort of man the glass showed him. I think they

are like the man who saw his back in a glass and had in his hand a plaster that would have ended his pain, but got no good because he put it on the glass instead of applying it to himself.

Lots of people do just this thing.

For example, to-day you hear everybody talking about "profiteering"; and all who talk are very angry—at somebody else.

Miners think coal-masters are profiteering: masters believe that miners are profiteering. "Profiteering" is a bad thing because it is a selfish thing, but everybody wants to stop somebody else. No one will honestly stick the plaster on his own back.

I know a man who got very angry and very eloquent about the greedy way everybody was grasping at big profits, and in a little he was telling with great glee how he had sold his motor-car for much more than he had paid for it, after having used it for six months! What he said about profiteering was quite right, only he should have applied the plaster to his own back.

I think sometimes people are like that in church. They hear some sin being spoken of and they think "what a good sermon it is! How true! How it fits So-and-so." They never think whether it fits them. So it may be a good sermon, but it does them no good because they don't apply it to themselves.

"That was a good sermon," a man said, "I wish my wife had heard it. It would have done her good." It might have done him good, but he didn't give it a chance; he applied it to his wife.

Now, boys and girls, the words of Jesus are all true, and they will do us all good, but we must apply them *to ourselves*, and not to other people.

Religion is no use if it is not applied. It isn't just knowledge about God; it's knowledge that helps us to do and to be, if we apply it.

You know we talk about pure mathematics and applied mathematics. Pure mathematics is all true and interesting on paper, but when it is applied it builds bridges and ships and mighty cities with



towering cathedrals and wonderful buildings.

Creeds and catechisms are like pure mathematics. It is not enough to know them on paper. We must use them, apply them to our lives and to our own souls. That is applied religion, and makes good and helpful men and women, and builds Christian character, which is the most wonderful building of all.

But we must apply it all to ourselves, not to other people.

When we hear it read, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," you mustn't think "That's for So-and-so." You must think "That means Me." That is what St. Paul did, for he added, "sinners, of whom I am chief." He put the plaster firmly on himself, and from a sinner he became a saint.

Jesus has good healing words for everything which hurts and hinders our soul, but we must take them and apply them firmly and honestly to our own soul.

## PASSING

---

“ Ready to distribute.”—1 *Timothy* vi. 18.

THAT means sharing things, passing on our good things, playing the game together and not each for our own hand.

I heard a missionary speaker once tell of the most remarkable football team he had ever seen. It was at Beyrout, I think, and organized by a young Scottish missionary.

The centre-forward was an Armenian, the forwards on either wing were Turks. There were a couple of Jews, a negro, a Copt, and a few other odds and ends ; a mixture like the Tower of Babel, of nations that usually hated each other and did each other all the harm they could. Yet they were all playing in one football team, brought together by the power of Jesus.

The missionary said he was told that the most difficult thing to teach these men was to pass to each other. Every

one was keen to dart down the field and score the goal himself; and when their teacher had got a man to understand that he must play, not for himself, but for the team, when he had taught him to pass, he knew he had done a great thing not only for the team, but for that man's own life.

Now that is just what St. Paul means when he says, Christians must be "ready to distribute." They must learn to pass.

Our world in Europe is to-day in a terrible mess because every nation is playing its own game. They are fixed on their own plans. They want to mend the trouble in their own way. They want to score the goals and gather the glory single-handed. This won't do in football and it won't do in the big game of life; and things will never be right until each nation forgets itself and denies itself, and all pull together for the good of all.

In our own nation we see the same thing. We were one nation in the War, pulling together like one team, all ready to give up something of our own for the

sake of the nation. That is how we got on and won the War.

Now we are all at sixes and sevens. Miners, engineers, employers, workmen, each determined on his own score, and nobody scoring at all for that very reason. It isn't a team when every player is playing on his own and won't pass to the next man, and we aren't a nation to-day. We are just a lot of jostling people, not playing the game, not "ready to distribute."

This is the secret of life for every one of us. The great lesson is to learn to pass.

If you have comfort, it isn't yours only. Pass it on. There are others who are being starved on the wing because you don't pass to them. They lose heart and interest and fall out of the game discouraged. Pass on your comfort, your friendship, your money, pass out and play the game for the team.

This is the spirit of our Master. It is what He did ; and being a Christian means just this, being "ready to distribute."

Look farther than our own nation. We have good news to give, the news of the

love of God that Jesus Christ brought. That isn't our own for ourselves only. There are thousands in the world who know nothing about it. It's for them too. We have got to pass it on. That is what we call Foreign Missions. I call it just playing the game. These heathen people are being starved of what they have a right to and a great need of, because so many Christians at home say they don't believe in Foreign Missions, or while they say they believe, give so little and show so little interest, that it is plain they don't really believe at all.

God wants us all to be one, playing like a team for His kingdom, all the nations together for God, all the people in each nation together for God, all for each and each for all. We are fond of the words "my" and "mine," but when Jesus taught us to pray He left these words out, and told us to say "our," *Our* Father, *our* daily bread, *our* sins, *our* temptations. "Ready to distribute," says St. Paul, "bear one another's burdens," "share in all good things," "members of each other," playing

the game together under our Captain Christ.

If we come to Him, the first lesson He will teach us, the hardest to learn, the most worth learning for it is the key to a happy life, will be to learn to pass.

## ON WHICH SIDE ?

---

"No man can serve two masters . . . Ye cannot serve God and mammon."—*St. Matthew* vi. 24.

I READ once a story of a very famous man. His name was Faraday, and he discovered a great many interesting and useful things about electricity and chemistry.

I am not going to tell you about these, for it would need a lot of very long words, and we don't want more long words than we can help.

It is of a discovery he made when he was a little boy that I wish to write.

At that time he was very poor and was selling newspapers on the street. One day he was waiting for his papers outside the big iron gates of the newspaper office, and he did what every boy has done with railings—put his hands through, then his arms, and at last, very carefully, his head.

Have you read about Peepy Jellaby in Dickens's story of *Bleak House*? They

found him with his head through the front area railings. He had got it through, but he could not get it back, so his legs were kicking frantically on the one side, and his head howling loudly on the other.

But Faraday, though his head was through the railings, wasn't howling ; he was thinking !

He was saying to himself, " My head and hands are on one side, my heart and body are on the other side : *on which side am I ?* "

He hadn't time to think it out, for some one pushed the gates open and nearly twisted his head off altogether ; and he discovered then that it's no good trying to be on both sides of a railing at the same time.

That is a discovery we have all got to make. Some people only learn it painfully, like Faraday ; some learn it at the beginning without pain.

God has set up iron railings on one side of our life—hard, immovable iron railings.



It is because God is Love that they are there. Love is not a soft and feeble thing that lets its children do just whatever they like. That isn't love at all, but laziness. There is iron in love, and God has made the iron into railings to stop us from going into danger and destruction.

I mean His commandments, which say, "Thou shalt not," with an iron firmness.

They are like the fence at the top of some cliff. While it is there, the children can play happily in the meadow it guards. Beyond it is the edge of the cliffs, and a fearful fall to the rocks below; but the children needn't heed that so long as they are on the right side of the fence. It is an iron kindness, not to make the children prisoners and keep them from pleasure, but to make them free from fear, and to guard them from danger.

But some people are like Faraday; their heart is on one side and their head and hands are on the other.

They can't get rid of the railings, so they try to be on both sides at once.

Their heart on the one side, tells them

God is right ; their head and hands, on the other side, are busy with things that God cannot bless.

Their conscience is on the one side, and speaks for Christ ; their business in on the other side, and the railings run between. It won't do. It can't be done.

Jesus says, " Ye cannot serve God and gold."

" A man cannot serve two masters." That is, you can't be on both sides of the railings at once.

It is no use pretending that they aren't there, it is no use trying to explain them away, and there is no way round them. They are iron and fixed for ever. It is no good grumbling at them, for they are for our good, and do not keep us from anything we need.

On the one side is God's garden of life, full of brave and beautiful joys ; on the other the jungle of sin, with lurking dangers and fearful places of shame and death.

To climb the railings may be death and must be danger ; to try to be on both

---

sides at once is to try an impossible thing. On which side are you? Ask your heart, and when it tells you, may this be your answer and your firm purpose—

“ We are on the Lord’s side,  
Saviour, we are Thine.”

## THE FOOT THAT STANDS

---

“ I went down to the potter’s house ; and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels.”—*Jer.* xviii. 3.

THIS passage tells how a prophet watched a potter working with the clay on his wheel. He watched the shapeless lump of clay spinning round, and under the potter’s hand rising up into the shape of a cup. Suddenly it collapsed. The potter stopped his wheel, crushed the cup back into a lump again and made out of it another vessel.

Then an idea came to him, a “ word of the Lord,” he says ; and it was this, that what the potter did to the clay, God was doing to His people, making them over again after they had failed in His hand.

That is how “ the word of the Lord ” came to people : not by a voice that all could hear, but through eyes that could see and minds that could understand what they saw and gather the gold of

God's truth from crevices of common everyday things.

That is how "words of God" still come. Here is one that came the other day to a lady who, like the prophet Jeremiah, had gone down to the house of the potter.

It was not in the East where they sit at work, but in an English village. The potter stood at his work, and drove the wheel with his foot. When he had finished a work and was preparing another, she said, "Your foot must get very tired driving the wheel?" "No," he said, "it isn't the foot that works that is tired: it's the foot that stands."

That was "a word of the Lord" to that lady, and when I read it, it was a word of the Lord to me, and I want to pass it on so that it may be a word of the Lord to you. It is a word that sings itself into a kind of lilt. Make it one of your songs:

"It isn't the foot that works that tires;  
It's the foot that's standing still."

Here we are at the wheel of life, trying to make the clay of our own character

into something that will hold and keep the joy and goodness of life.

We have two sides to our nature, like the two feet of the potter, our body and our soul. I suppose a sensible potter learns to work with his left foot as well as his right, and gives them turn about at the treadle, so that both grow strong together, and the strong foot is not held back and hindered by the weak. It's no use being one-sided. It's no use having one leg like Samson's, if the other is a spindle-shank. It's no use having one leg with a calf like the fatted calf, if the other is like one of Pharaoh's lean kine. It's no use being able on the one side to run like Eric Liddell, if the other side can hardly hobble. For the two sides have to go together : their pace will be the pace of the slower side, their strength the strength of the weaker.

These things sound absurd ; but they are just what is happening to many people in turns of their body and their soul.

One side is very busy ; the other gets too little to do. We all have plenty to

do on the one side, men at their work and business, housewives in their homes, boys and girls with lessons and games and hobbies. But the other side, the side of worship and prayer and serving God and reading His word—that side is underworked. And because the soul is underworked, the soul is tired ; and because the soul is tired, the body tires too.

The world is full of tired folk. They come to the end of the week, they tell you, tired out, too tired to go to church. The reason why they are so tired is not because they have overworked their body, it is because they are underworking their soul. It is tired because it has nothing to do. It's left to loaf about the corners of life, and loafing is more exhausting than any work can ever be.

The remedy for the boy or girl that is tired after Saturday's football or hockey is not to lie in bed on Sunday morning, but to get up and go to church, and give their soul a chance.

If you're fagged with the week's lessons, the remedy is not to stop thinking, but to

think about something else. Go to Sunday school or Bible class and let your mind think on the things of God. Then you will be refreshed for Monday.

Tired bodies, and worried overworked minds, will find their healing in worshipping and praising God.

All life will gain strength as the soul is strong, and it can't be strong if it be left standing idle.

“ It isn't the foot that works that tires ;  
It's the foot that's standing still.”



## BROADCASTING

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“ A good man out of the good treasure of his heart *sendeth forth* good things : and an evil man out of the evil treasure *sendeth forth* evil things.”—*St. Matthew* xii. 35.

Most people are interested in “ listening in,” and a great many, with bought sets, or home-made sets, are busy at it.

But “ broadcasting ” comes first to give us something to listen to, and that is what I want to speak about.

How many broadcasting stations are there in Great Britain ? You tell me “ about twenty,” and perhaps you go on to tell me “ they are 5SC, 2LO, 2IT,” and so on. Well I would like to say there are about forty-five million ! Everybody is a broadcasting station, you and I, and every one. We broadcast what Jesus calls “ idle words,” that is, the words we say without thinking, the words that just spill over out of the “ abundance of the heart,” the words that come out because the heart is full of them. We are not specially thinking what we

say ; they come out in fun, in anger, in chatter, and we don't think where they go or who hears them.

At one station the Children's Talk was being given, and it sounded as if the speaker loved the children and his task of speaking to them, but an "idle word" spoilt it all. He finished up, "Good-bye, my dear boys and girls. *Shut off that wretched machine !* " It was overheard.

Now Jesus says, "A good man out of the fulness of his heart broadcasts good things, and an evil man, evil things."

Let me show some of both sorts.

Once Jesus was praying to God. He wasn't thinking of His disciples. He was just letting the fulness of His heart overflow to His Father. But the disciples heard Him ; and when He finished, they came and asked Him to teach them to pray.

Paul and Silas were once in prison, in an inner cell, sore from scourging, with their feet in the stocks. They weren't thinking about the other prisoners, and they sang praises to God, and the prisoners listened. They had never heard anything

like that in prison before ; groans, curses, and bitter complaints they had often heard, but not praises sung to God. Can't you imagine how it would set them thinking ?

The poet Browning has a beautiful poem which tells of a day in the life of a little Italian mill-girl. It was her one holiday in the year, and as she went about she sang a happy song about God, because her heart was full of joy and God. Different people heard it, and the poem tells how it comforted some who were sad, and stopped from evil some who were sinful. Pippa never knew. She just broadcasted a good thing out of a good heart ; and she goes to bed wondering if her life could ever touch the lives of those others to help. She didn't know that she had done it by her idle words, because her idle words were good words broadcast out of a good heart.

Here is the other sort. Peter is standing by a fire in the courtyard of a house denying that he is a disciple of Jesus. He gets angry, and oaths and curses pour out broadcast. Then he sees Jesus looking at

him. He realizes where his words have gone, and how they have hurt, and Peter rushes out weeping bitterly.

An English king is in France, and some news is brought to him that makes him furiously angry. Hot words burst from his lips. "Will no one rid me of this troublesome priest?" The evil words fall on evil ears. Soon men are spurring on the road, and in a short while the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas à Becket, lies murdered in his cathedral, because King Henry broadcasted wild and angry words without thinking how far they would go and what harm they would do.

Sometimes a father checks his son for using some foolish phrase, and he gets the answer, "I heard you saying it."

Little boys listen to what the big boys say and copy it. Little girls listen to the big ones and do the same.

Take care what you are broadcasting. Our thoughts are our own, but after they are spoken they are out of our power to control.

“ If I should *speak* thus,” says a wise old Psalmist, who was thinking very bitter things—“ if I should *speak* thus, I would offend against the generation of thy children.”

If we have bitter thoughts, we must keep them to ourselves for the sake of others. It is not easy always to do it, for full hearts spill over. Therefore the best way is to ask God to keep our hearts, so that they be full of His love, and the things that are good and happy and kind. Then we will broadcast nothing that will hurt, and much that will make for happiness in this listening world, and we will not need to fear when God calls us to account for our idle words.

## REFLECTIONS

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“ We all . . . beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord.”—2 *Cor.* iii. 18.

THREE hundred years ago, when our English Bible was made, a very fine work was finished ; but the men who did it were only men, and they made some mistakes. This verse is one of their mistakes. They thought it meant that the face of Jesus Christ is like a mirror in which we see God, whom we can't see in any other way, and so they used the words which stand in our Bible to-day. Of course, that is true. We do know what God is by looking at Jesus. Our Lord Himself said, “ Whosoever hath seen me, hath seen the Father.”

But although it is true, it is not what St. Paul was thinking about, and it isn't what he meant to say. What he meant was that Christians are like mirrors to help people to see Jesus. This is quite easy

to understand and very good to remember. We mostly think of a mirror as a means of seeing ourselves, but they are also used to let us see somebody else.

In the village of Comrie, in Scotland, there is a very sharp corner. The houses hide the road and you can't see who is coming round the corner; so to avoid accidents, a large mirror is set across the corner, so that as you approach you can see reflected in the mirror the carts or bicycles or motors that are coming to meet you.

In some city houses, you may notice a mirror set at an angle in one of the windows to reflect into the room whoever is standing at the door.

One day I was visiting a man who was ill in bed. His wife was looking after him. She was sitting by the fire, and noticing that the high end of the wooden bedstead cut them off from seeing each other, I remarked, "But you can't see your patient, and he can't see you." "Oh! yes we can," she said, and pointed to the corner of the room where a tall pier-glass stood. She had only to raise her eyes to see her husband

reflected in the glass, he had only to look across to see her.

Now St. Paul means something like that. Nobody can see Jesus face to face, as "once in royal David's city" the disciples saw Him. There is something between: a hymn says, "The veil of sense hangs dark between Thy blessed face and mine." Jesus is a living Spirit, but our eyes can't see spirits.

How are people to see Christ? Christians must be the mirror, reflecting from their lives the unseen Christ who is helping them to live. People are to see in us His glory, His grace and truth, the goodness of Jesus.

It is a great matter what we say about Jesus, but it is a far greater matter what people see of Him in us. They won't see much if the mirror is dusty. If we let dust settle on our habits of prayer and worship and kindness they will only see a vague, blurred shadow. They won't see much if there is only a broken bit of the mirror, only a bit called Sunday morning, or an hour of Sunday school.



They won't see truly if the mirror is twisted and warped by evil passions and bad habits. Have you ever seen distorting mirrors? I have seen them in exhibitions and people sitting opposite them laughing at what they saw in them. For as people walked past, quite nice, good-looking people, one mirror made them look as long and thin as a piece of string, another made them look as fat as balloons, another made them look like nothing on earth. And if a visitor from Mars who knew nothing about the people of earth had only seen them in these mirrors he would have taken a very queer and completely wrong idea of what we were like.

And some folk get very strange and unlovely ideas of Jesus because they only see Him distorted and caricatured in the lives of some Christians. So we have a big responsibility and a great task, to reflect Jesus truly in our lives to men, so that they may want to know Him. Our life is the mirror. It must be clean, so that they shall see Him clearly. It must be complete, so that they shall see Him

whole. It must be straight so that they shall see Him truly. An old conundrum asks: "What is the difference between a looking-glass and a fool?" "The looking-glass reflects without speaking, and the fool speaks without reflecting."

We must never speak or act without reflecting Jesus in our acts and words, and it must be a "speaking likeness."

Then the world will always see  
Christ the Holy Child in me.

## HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

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“Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man.”—*St. Matthew* vii. 24.

“Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”—*St. James* i. 22.

THE Chinese are a strange people, and have many curious ways. The other day I heard something about them which made me feel that some of their queer ways are very like the ways of other folk not so far away as China.

A Chinese governor of a large district, who was a go-ahead sort of man and anxious for his people to make progress, was much impressed by football, and convinced of the good it does both to the bodies and the characters of those who play it in the right spirit. So he issued an edict to all the heads of schools and colleges under him that the students and scholars were to be taught football. The heads of colleges set themselves to their task, and this is how they did it. They got the

rules of football, and the teachers learned them off by heart, and when they had done this, they started on the scholars. The classes chanted the rules, as if they were magical incantations with a virtue in the very words. It was a big task, for the rules of Rugby Football run to thirty-nine pages of print. But they stuck at it with Chinese industry, and there is no industry so patient and painstaking, and when at last they were word perfect, and could say what a drop-kick and a punt, a mark and a penalty, and so on were, the report went back to the governor that they had all been taught football !

They knew the rules, but could they play the game? They forgot that the rules are not for the sake of rules, but for the sake of the game. They had still to go and play, to put the rules into practice. Their knowledge was no use till they used it. To know the rules does not make a player, but only a looker-on, criticising and finding fault with the play of others, and not even fit to do that. They had to take the rules out of the school into the

field and play to them, and bring legs and feet and bodies and tempers into obedience to the rules. But they never thought of that. These funny Chinese folk !

But are they the only ones who have made this mistake ? We have all a great game before us—the game of life. We have got to know the rules or we will make a sorry mess of it ; and the rules are in our Bibles. It is our book of rules. It tells us how to “ play the game,” and shows us men and women who kept the rules and did great things, and others who broke the rules and didn’t play a straight clean game, and who came to grief. We must read our book of rules ; learn them, study them, get them into our head and into our heart. That is what we do at Sunday school and church. That is needful. Fancy any one offering to play football that didn’t know when he was off-side ! Well, the Bible tells us when we are off-side, and what it costs to be off-side, what we may do and what we must not do. And we must know.

But that isn’t enough. Repeating texts

and saying Catechism never made a Christian. We have got to take these rules every day out into the fields, and play the game in obedience to them. They have got to be learned and then they have got to be done.

Now there are people who neither learn the rules nor play the game, and they are no use to anybody. There are people who won't learn the rules but who plunge into the game. They are sure to have many a sore time and many a sad down-come and they will have to learn the rules in the school of hard knocks, since they will learn no other way. There are also those who learn the rules, but never think of putting them into practice. "They hear my words and do them not," Jesus said. St. James says, "they are hearers of the word and not doers, deceiving their own selves." They deceive nobody else. They think they are Christians, but nobody else does. They don't understand how difficult it is to play the great game of being a Christian, for they've never tried but they are very ready to find fault and say what other people should

have done, by the rules. They give advice, but they never give an example. They are like the Chinese. They think to know the rules is everything ; but I think to try to do them even if you blunder often, and to keep on trying, is far better. Christianity is not just knowing, it is being and doing.

“The sermon is done?” said an old lady to another, meeting her outside the church. “No,” she said, “it’s only finished. It’s got to be done now.”

Learn the great words of the Bible, the wise words of Jesus Christ ; then go and do them. They are meant to make great lives and they will, if we not only hear the Word, but do it.

## TO BE CONTINUED

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“ And after this.”—*Hebrew ix. 27.*

WHAT tantalizing words these are ! They always come at the most exciting bit. There you are curled up in a big chair following the hero breathlessly through the pages of the *B.O.P.* or *The Story Magazine*. He has got the rope cut through and cast off from his wrists after super-human and ingenious struggles with a bit of glass ; he and the heroine are tiptoeing out of the mysterious house, when suddenly he feels the cold rim of a revolver touching his brow and a hoarse voice says . . . “ to be continued in our next.” How can you wait a month ? It is more than flesh and blood can bear ! Think how people waited for the next number of *The Pickwick Papers* to hear what Mr. Pickwick’s next adventure might be.

Yet they are comforting words too, for



they tell us there is more coming, and that is good news.

And the next chapter should never be quite a surprise: for a well-written story goes straight on. It doesn't zigzag. One chapter grows out of another, and so the first chapter is most important of all. A writer spends more time and pains on his first chapter than on any other.

Now, every one of you is an author, busy on a story that is going to run to five chapters. Chapter I.—Childhood, up to twelve years old. Chapter II.—Youth, up to twenty-one years. Chapter III.—Manhood and Womanhood, up to forty. Chapter IV.—Middle Age, up to sixty. Chapter V.—Old Age. There is your story in its chapters. Some of them seem very far off. It's difficult to think you will ever be middle-aged and unable to play football or climb trees. It's impossible to think of your old age. Will you ever write these chapters? What will be in them?

It very much depends on Chapter I, on which you are busy now. What happens in that will be "continued in our

next," one after the other, right on. "The child is father of the man." Chapter I is the father of all the chapters that follow.

Now you are free to choose. As you go on you will be less and less free. More and more the chapters will write themselves. Authors tell us they can't make their characters do what they want them to do. They take their own way after a bit. And so does our character. We can control it at the beginning, but it'll go on as it has begun. The third chapter of the Prodigal Son's story, which is mostly about pigs and pig-stys, and is a pitiful business, was made certain when he was writing Chapter I very carelessly and conceitedly in the father's house.

So watch Chapters I and II. For, though old men forget what they wrote then, these things turn up afterwards and work themselves out for good or bad.

"Confound the legs!" said an old man, who had become Lord Chancellor and was infirm and gouty. "I'd have taken more care of them, if I had known they were to carry a Lord Chancellor." Just so, he

sowed the seeds of ill-health in Chapters I and II, and they came up in Chapter V and shadowed all his success.

Then watch the first chapters. Write them with Christ to help you, and the others will be good reading to the end. Child faith and love of Christ will be "continued in our next," and no one who loves you will be afraid of what the next chapters will bring.

And when the last chapter is finished, it is only the first volume that is completed. There is to be a second volume. This life is "to be continued in our next."

That is a good thing to remember. When we see some hindered life, never strong, or touched with the terrible handicaps of blindness or deformity, there is another chapter coming, which God will make more happy. When a life is cut suddenly short, it isn't ended. It is "to be continued." When we wonder why God lets wickedness go unpunished, remember the story isn't finished yet.

Robert Louis Stevenson has a little fable in which he pictures Captain Smollett

and Long John Silver talking the story of *Treasure Island* over after chapter xxxii was finished. The scoundrelly sea-cook is very pleased with himself and says the Author is on his side. Captain Smollett is puzzled at the way things are going, but he will stick to his duty, he says. "The Author is on the right side ; and you mind your eye. You're not through with this story yet, and there's trouble coming for you." And there was : for Long John Silver was caught out and left on the island.

We, too ; we're not through with this story yet. This life here is just the first volume. There is to be a sequel somewhere else.

But I am certain that if the first volume begins with obedience to our Father, and love to His Son, the second will be called "The Father's House." Dickens wrote "A Tale of Two Cities" ; we are writing "A Tale of Two Worlds" ; and when God's angel of death bids us finish Chapter V and write "to be continued in our next," we need not be at all afraid, for the "next" will be the best chapter of all.

## KNOCKING-OFF

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“ If thy hand offend thee, cut it off. If thy foot offend thee, cut it off.”—*St. Mark* ix. 43, 45.

Two men were once in an Art Gallery, and they were looking at some statuary, beautiful shapes of white marble.

“ It is wonderful to be able to make things like that ! It must be very difficult to be a sculptor,” said one.

“ Oh ! ” said the other ; “ not a bit of it. You just get a block of marble and *knock off what you don't need !* ”

It is not quite so simple as all that ; but there is this much truth in it, that a good part of the art of the sculptor is knocking off what he does not need. Only he must have a clear idea of what he is trying to make, a “ vision beautiful ” in his mind to guide him as to what he is to knock off. He does not just carve and slash at random in the faith that if he

smashes away long enough he will get a statue.

A great part of the Art of Life is to know what to knock off ; and you cannot know that unless you know exactly what you are aiming at.

A man is in ill-health, and he calls in the doctor. The doctor says : “ You must knock off certain things.” Perhaps certain food, or too much smoking, or too much work, or too late hours. Whatever it is, it stands in the way of health ; and if the man is in earnest about health, he knocks it off.

A boy who is keen on athletics, who is out for a record, or a place in the school fifteen, knows that he must knock off sweets and pastries and such things. They are nice things, and there is nothing wrong about them, only they make the record, or the place in the team impossible, and they have got to go. Knock them off. Here is a student working for his honours degree. He cannot give time to study and have time for festivities as well. If he is to win first-class honours, he must knock them off.

Now what are you girls and boys who read this planning to make of your life? God has given you just a rough lump of marble out of the quarry of life, and you are to shape out of it the thing we call "character." Have you any idea what shape you are working to?

God has given you not only the marble for the statue, but the model. That is Jesus Christ. We are to be "like Him." We are to "come to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." We are to work to that.

That tells us what we do not need and what we must knock off. Of course, we must knock off all that is wrong, all that is untrue, unkind, unclean; but it tells us what we must knock off of things which are not wrong in themselves, but which must be knocked off if the likeness of Christ is to be wrought out.

The question as to whether we should do or not do certain things is not just settled by whether they are right or wrong. That is an easy thing to settle. The difficult question is whether we should do

certain things that are not wrong in themselves. But it is not so difficult if we remember into what shape we are trying to carve our life, into the likeness of Christ. Then we will knock off what hinders that. We shall say, "It is not like Christ. It is wrong for me. Knock it off."

This will help you not to be afraid of following Christ. Some people think religion is something that makes people miserable, because it is always saying "Don't." Jesus speaks of denying oneself and of sacrifice, and it frightens some folk.

It need not. Do you think a sculptor working out a beautiful statue grieves over the bits he knocks off as they fall to the floor?

The boy training for a prize does not worry because he gives up a lot of sweet things. He is out for a far better thing. The student working for honours does not pity himself for giving up festivities. He knows his degree is worth it.

And what you give up for Christ's sake, what you knock off to be like Him, you



will never miss. It does not hurt. His burden is light.

The last thing is this. We are like students working in the studio of a master sculptor whose name is God. Sometimes He takes the chisel and knocks something off our life. The keen chisel of Death cuts off someone that was very dear to us ; or sometimes He knocks off some hope we had planned and longed for.

Well, be sure of this, He knows what He is doing, and why. He, too, wants us to be like Jesus. He, and we, are working to the same model. He does, as the master shipbuilder in Longfellow's "Saga of King Olaf" did to the ship he was building. The king came down to the yard one day to find the ship scarred and gashed.

Some one all his labours balking,  
Down her sides had cut deep gashes ;  
Not a plank was spared.

The king was furious and demanded who had done it. A man stood forward ; it was the master shipbuilder. He bade the king wait while he worked with his adze.

He knew what he was doing. The ship was too heavy. He was making her a finer ship, and in the end the king confessed it with joy.

Work to the likeness of Christ. Knock off without hesitation all that hinders. And when God knocks off something we thought we could not spare, remember that He too is working to make us like Jesus Christ.

## BLACK AND GOLD

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“ When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.”—  
*Job xxiii. 10.*

I DON'T suppose girls and boys take much notice of the pattern on the outside of their tea-cups.

They are more interested in what is inside them, and are more pleased with a cup which holds a lot than with one that has pretty colours on the outside.

But perhaps, as they grow older, and maybe before that, they may notice the decoration of the cup and wonder how its beautiful colours came to be so delicate and so lasting.

The story of a fine china cup is a long and very interesting one. After it has gone through many processes, and has received its shape, it comes to the artist's studio to be coloured. The colours are laid on with great care, but what would astonish you, would be the amount of

black. It looks so dull that you wonder what the artist means.

Then you learn that to make the colours fast, the cup has to go into a furnace of great heat. In the firing the colours change, and in the end what began as black comes out of the fire gold.

That may help you to understand our text.

The world of life is God's factory where He is working to make beautiful souls. He shapes them by all that happens to us, and then He lays on the colours.

We all want bright colours in our lives : joy, happiness, pleasure, laughter. And we don't like black. Crimson and purple and white and blue are colours of gladness, but black seems a blot that spoils it all. If we had our way we would have nothing but these joyous colours. That is what we ask, but Jesus once said to His disciples, " Ye know not what ye ask " ; and neither do we.

For if we had our way, our lives would miss the gold that is the truest beauty. So God puts in black : sorrow, and trial,

temptation and disappointments and discipline ; things that are hard to bear ; black things that make us wonder if God really is Love.

These things should help us to see that He is Love, and very wise Love ; for He doesn't mean the black to remain black. He means it to be gold, and if we have patience and faith, the furnace of life will turn the black to gold.

You can see this in the life of Jesus. You remember how His ministry began in Galilee ? The first word He spoke on the Mount was " Happy." The sun shone and the wildflowers nodded at His feet, and He picked them and set them in His parables and told people to consider the lilies of the field. The sunshine glinted on the wild-bird's wing, and these, too, flew into His parables and nested. Crowds followed Him, children came to Him. He wrought His first miracle amid the gladness of a wedding.

It was all joy and sunlight. Joy was in all His parables ; joy of women finding lost coins ; joy of shepherds finding

lost sheep ; joy of fathers finding lost sons ; so much joy that the frozen-hearted Pharisees found fault with Jesus and His disciples.

Then one day Jesus told the disciples about the other things that were coming, the black in the picture—the Cross and Death. And Peter protested that this must never be. He, too, didn't like black, because he didn't know the black was to become gold.

Then the black came : the betrayal and arrest of Jesus, His scourging and mocking, His Cross and death and burial. It seemed to them all black.

Then, at last, they saw and understood. For the wounds and the Cross and the crown of thorns shone out in a golden glory. They “ beheld His glory ” as they had never seen it before or imagined it.

Well, we must remember these things. Your friends hope that your life will have all the bright colours of joy and gladness, that the pattern will have a lot of happiness and laughter, and friendship and love and innocent joy.

But the black will be there, too. Sorrow will come. Shadows will fall on the road.

Don't be afraid of the black. Remember that when God lays on the black, He is preparing the gold, without which life misses its perfect beauty.

“ When he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.”

## AT THE BOTTOM OF THE TUB

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“ Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily.”—*Col.* iii. 23.

HERE is a sermon found in a tub.

A tub may seem a queer place to find a text, but you will remember our Lord found a parable of the Kingdom of Heaven in a woman’s meal tub ; and so I found mine in a tub, in which children were ducking for apples on Hallowe’en.

It is a Scottish custom and only observed on All Hallows Eve. A big tub is filled with water and a lot of rosy-cheeked apples put in. There they bob up and down for anyone who will get them ; but your hands must be behind your back. You must bite into them to get them out. You can’t do it without getting wet, and that is where the fun comes in.

Now, games reveal character, and this game tells us a lot about ourselves.

All the children want the apples, but some are more concerned about not getting



wet. They are like the famous cat in the proverb: "The cat would eat fish, but wouldn't wet her paws." They peck at the apples. They try to find one with a stalk, and waste a lot of time waiting for the stalk to come uppermost; or they pick out a little apple, and are content with a little one, if only they don't get wet.

Others see they must get wet, but try to get as little wet as possible. They work the apple to the side and get it out with only wetting one side of their face.

Others go at it heartily. They don't care how wet they get. They are going to get apples. Their heads go right in to the bottom, and up they come, dripping but triumphant, their teeth firm in a big apple. At the end of the game they have got the best fun and the most and the biggest apples.

This is very like life.

There are boys who want to play football, but don't want to be hurt. They never get the joy of the game, and they never get honour. They are people who want soft jobs, wages without work, prizes

without study. In fact, they are looking for an apple with a stalk, and the prizes that life gives to the brave and whole-hearted they miss.

There are others who are willing to face some trouble, but it must be as little as possible. They won't take pains. They'll only give up a little pleasure or time. They will work, but they won't risk overwork. They are very anxious about holidays. They give a little, as much as they can't avoid ; they worship a little, perhaps once on Sunday, but they are careful not to be let in for too much.

There are those who go into work and worship wholeheartedly. They are in dead earnest. In games they are not thinking about saving their shins. If sacrifice of time and amusement is asked for work, for home, for Christ's service, they never count it at all. Life gives them its prizes.

You can see all three sorts in the Gospels. Nicodemus wanted to follow Jesus, but he was afraid of what people would say, afraid of losing his position. So he was only a secret disciple.

One man said, "Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest"; but when he found that Jesus was homeless and His life hard, it was too much for him. Another said, "I will follow Thee, but first let me go and say farewell to those in the house." Another said, "I will follow Thee, but let me wait till I bury my father." Jesus had no use for them, and they missed the prize of His companionship, because they wouldn't pay the price.

The disciples heard Jesus call them, and they never counted the cost. They "left all and followed Him," and so their names are great and honoured for ever.

Life has no prizes for the timid, who are frightened to get wet. The rewards and deep satisfactions of Christ are for those who are willing to dip deep in the waters of sacrifice and service.

Now, here is Life before you like a tub full of apples. Good things for your body and mind and soul, are floating on its waters, and your Father wishes you to win them.

How are you going to face Life? Here

is a motto from St. Paul: "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as unto the Lord."

Every good thing is for us, but every good thing means giving up something. You can't have health without giving up sloth and lazy comforts, and things like drink. You can't have knowledge without giving up to study the time that amusement wants. You can't have any gains without taking pains; and you can't have, or become, all that Jesus Christ can give you and make you, if you are afraid of the water and the depths of sacrifice and service. To have Him, means to deny yourself; but it is well worth it.

No one knows what the years are going to bring you, but if whatever you do—games, work, study and worship—you do it "heartily as unto the Lord," without half measures and hanging back, not thinking how little will serve, but how much you can do, always giving your best, then Life will give you its best, and leave you better, wiser, happier, and more like Christ than it found you.

## SPOILED PALATES

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“Now our soul is dried away; there is nothing at all; we have nought save this manna to look to.”—*Numbers* xi. 6. (Rev. Vers.)

THE Bible often calls us to taste and see the goodness of God. It speaks of “tasting the Heavenly Food.” How do we taste anything?

It is a matter of the palate, and the palate is the hard upper roof of the mouth. We put things against that with our tongue, and so taste to see if it is good. If it is not, we say it is “unpalatable”; that is, our palate doesn’t like it.

Now, although the palate is a hard thing, it is very delicate. If it is misused, it may be wasted, and our power of taste destroyed for ever.

There is a story of this in the Bible. It tells how God gave manna, food from Heaven to the Israelites in the desert. Soon they lost the taste for it, and began to grumble. They said, “We remember

the garlick, and the leeks, and the onions . . . and now there is nothing before us but this manna." Something had ruined their palates, so that heavenly food was to them tasteless. What was it? It was the spicy, high-flavoured food they had had in Egypt.

They had been slaves there, with hard work and long hours, but their taskmasters were wise enough to give them "tasty" food; hot, full-flavoured feeding, and they had liked it.

Now they were free men. They forgot all the hardships of slavery, and only remembered the hot spicy food; and the food which God gave from Heaven was not inviting. They said it had no taste.

It had a taste. We are told it tasted like honey, and that is a nice taste. The sad truth was, they had lost the power to taste. Their palates had become dull, and wholesome food couldn't waken any feeling in them.

This is a warning to us all. We have three palates, and we cannot afford to play with any of them.

There is the palate of our mouth. Many people waste it, as the Israelites did. People live out in India, and get fond of hot Indian dishes. They come home and must have the same sort of thing. They must have everything covered with pepper, and sometimes they become very peppery themselves. They have spoilt both their palate and their temper.

People who are always drinking whisky and brandy lose the taste for tea and milk, and wholesome plain things like that. Sometimes careless mothers let their children ruin their palates by too many sweets. Then they "can't eat milk puddings," which are ten times as good for them.

I expect at Christmas you all do well on turkey-stuffing, and mince-pies, and plum pudding ; and when it is all over you feel it is a dreadful come-down to plain fare. Like the Israelites, you think : " We remember the stuffing and the mince-pies and the plum pudding, and now there is nothing before us but this rice." But mother knows what is best.

Then there is the palate of the mind. It is what we mean when we say a person has "good taste" in clothes or books or music.

That palate too can be wasted. If one keeps tickling it by silly sensational stories and papers, and vulgar exciting tunes, one loses the taste for good books and good music, and it is a very hard price to pay. Excitement is very attractive, but it doesn't feed your mind; it only dulls your palate, so that if you devour "blood and thunder" stories, you lose the power to enjoy the best books. You go on wanting more and more exciting sensations, more and more desperate adventures, until at last nothing is exciting enough for your palate, and you have no taste for anything.

But the best books, if you come to them with a healthy, pure taste, feed your mind, and you can read them over and over again all your life.

You get tired of the heroes and heroines of the Penny Dreadfuls, but you never get tired of *David Copperfield* and *Tiny*



*Tim* and *Mr. Pickwick*, once you have learned to love them. They are friends for life, if you haven't spoiled your palate by spicy trash.

Most important of all is the palate of the soul, and the waste of it is saddest of all.

Sin puts lots of spice in its pleasures, not only to tempt us, but to make us find goodness tasteless in comparison.

Herod, in the Gospels, had been served with all sorts of exciting amusements, till he had lost the taste for anything else. One day Jesus was sent to him. Herod, we are told, "was exceeding glad, for he was desirous to see Him of a long season, because he had heard many things of Him, and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by Him."

But Jesus had nothing to show Herod but perfect goodness. Herod had no taste for goodness; holiness wasn't exciting. He would rather have seen a conjurer than Christ; a coarse jester would have pleased him more than the holy Jesus. The palate of his soul had been destroyed

by the hot-tasting pleasures and excitements of sin. So he sent Jesus away.

What a fearful loss, to waste the palate of the soul ; to destroy it with the spicy pleasures of sin, until the pure pleasures of love and worship and goodness are dull and tasteless to you, and you are bored with the House of God, and can't be bothered with the Bible.

Have "good taste" in everything, and above all don't fling away the power to "taste and see how gracious the Lord is."

## IN THE DARK ROOM

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“ I will give thee the treasures of darkness.”—*Isaiah* xlv. 3.

“ He discovereth deep things out of darkness.”—*Job* xii. 22.

I WONDER how many of the girls and boys who read this are photographers?

I do not mean how many have cameras, and press the button, and send the films to some shop to be developed and printed, and hand the bill to father for him to pay. That is not being a photographer; it is being lazy. And it is missing the greatest pleasure of all, which is to do the job yourself, and, in the dark room by the light of the red lamp, to watch the picture slowly appearing, and to feel, when it is complete, that it is your own work—your very own.

The other day I was developing some plates, and I want to tell you of one that was a disappointment. They all looked the very same until they went into the bath, and then, as the chemical wrought

its magical work on them, each began to show a face of its own and to recall holiday scenes.

But there was one which would not respond at all. Nothing came. I thought that it must be under-exposed and that patience might yet get something out of it ; but it was no use. Pains and patience were wasted on it. There was nothing there, and I was forced to admit that I had forgotten to pull out the slide and let the light get at the plate ! The plate was well made, the picture had been there, and the sun ready and able to print the picture on the plate, but the light did not get its chance to do its work, and the plate was blank. There was nothing to develop.

Now, girls and boys, our souls are like photographic plates. God has made them, prepared and sensitive, to receive the beauty and grace that He wishes to print on them ; but it takes the dark room to bring out what is there. Just as plates are all alike, until you take them into the dark and develop them, so people are very much alike until God takes them

into His dark room of sorrow, or disappointment, or trial. There is not much apparent difference between a real Christian and a good-natured ordinary person with no religion. It is the discipline of the dark room that brings out the difference.

We talk about "developing a plate," and we talk about a boy's or a girl's character "developing," and we mean exactly the same thing. The plate will develop according as it has been correctly and carefully exposed to the sunlight. If it has not been enough exposed, this picture will be thin and faint ; if it has not been exposed at all, there will be no picture.

And when God takes us into His dark room, what will develop there will depend on whether we have been letting the light of God, which shines in the face of Jesus, have its chance to do its work on our souls.

God takes John Milton into the dark room of blindness, and the wonderful thing that develops is the song of *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*.

God takes John Bunyan into the dark room of prison and persecution, and what develops there is the wonderful picture of *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

God takes St. John into the dark room of exile in Patmos, and what develops there are wonderful pictures of the City of God, and mighty music of the triumph of Christ.

And none of these things could have developed if these men's souls had not been rightly exposed to God's light. They gave the light its chance, and its work was beauty.

So some people go into God's darkness, and He gives them what the Bible calls "the Treasures of darkness." Sorrow brings out what the sunshine had printed on their soul, and they come out of the shadow and the sorrow with something of the likeness of Christ.

Others go into the same shadow and come out, not more beautiful in character, but bitter and sore and peevish. They bring nothing out of the darkness, because they had not let the light have its chance.

Girls and boys, we all of us will some day have to go into some such dark chamber of life. What will happen then? That depends on whether we are letting God's light touch our souls now, in the happy days.

The worship of God's House and God's Day; the study of His Word, our prayers, our quiet thought about Jesus, are like the exposure of a plate. They must not be at random, and just "when we feel like it." They must be carefully and faithfully done. And then, when the darkness of sorrow and loss and sore hearts comes upon us, the darkness will be the servant of the light, and God will bring us out into the light again like our Lord, more "developed" in His likeness.

## R. S. V. P.

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"Hear my prayer, O Lord . . . and in Thy faithfulness answer me."—*Ps. cxliii. 1.*

I FANCY all boys and girls know what R.S.V.P. means. These are initials that come at the end of something nice, usually an invitation. You are glad to see them, and though perhaps you do not know the French words they stand for, you know very well that they mean "Please reply."

When you see them, you know the people who sent the invitation care about you enough to want to know whether you are coming or not, and you know you must answer. And when you yourself put it at the end of an invitation you are sending to your friends, they know that it means the same thing, and that you want them.

I get lots of invitations to meetings and different affairs and, of course, I look to see if R.S.V.P. is at the end of them. Those that have not got the initials, I lay aside. I'll go or I'll not go, just as it may



turn out to be convenient. I know those who sent them do not care very much whether I come or whether I don't.

The others I take more thought over. I look in my diary and mark them down, and then take paper and send the answer that is asked for.

Sometimes there is just that difference in the way people ask for things.

A message-boy is sitting lazily on the pavement reading a story. As I pass he half looks up and says: "Please, will you tell me the time?"

I know he is not thinking about his message, but about his story; that he does not want to know the time to use it, but to waste it. There is no *R.S.V.P.* in his question, so I just say, "It's getting on for twelve o'clock," or "it's past eleven," or some such answer.

It is all he wants and it is all he gets; and before I have finished, his nose is in his paper again and his work forgotten.

Another boy, walking briskly along with his parcels, looks me straight in the face and asks the time. I see he wants to

know, that he is anxious to be punctual and prompt in his business. I can see R.S.V.P. in his face and attitude. So I take out my watch for him and he gets the precise answer he wants and deserves.

I think God must see just the same difference in our prayers, and I like the story I saw somewhere of a little girl who said she was not going to say "Amen" any more, but "R.S.V.P." when she ended her prayers at night. She was like David who said, "Hear my prayer, O Lord; give ear to my supplications; and in Thy faithfulness, *answer me.*"

I think many prayers get no answer because they do not really expect one. They are customary prayers, said because it is the right thing to say them; but that's all, and once they are said, that's the end of them. There is no waiting and watching for the expected answer, as we watch the posts after we have sent out a note with R.S.V.P.

In the Bible we read how the people of Israel were taken away captives to Babylon. They prayed for return, but

the years passed. They went on praying, as the Jews to-day pray, "Next year in Jerusalem," but they did not mean it. They were fairly comfortable where they were.

So God did not open for them the way back they prayed for; but the prophet says there will come a day when God will say, "they shall ask the way to Zion *with their faces thitherward*"—and then God will answer them.

Once a great preacher, Fra Rocco, asked all the people who wished to be saved from their sins to hold up their hands. A forest of hands went up. Then he cried, "Holy Archangel Michael, with Thy mighty sword, cut off every hand that is raised insincerely," and almost every hand went suddenly down.

St. Augustine tells us how he used to pray, "Lord, convert me from my sins, but *not yet.*"

So many of our prayers have no R.S.V.P. to them. We pray to be made good and like Jesus, but perhaps it would give us no end of a fright if we thought God was

going to take us at our word. That is not the way to pray. God knows our hearts and He does not answer prayers that we don't mean. So, when you pray, let there be an R.S.V.P. in the heart of your praying.

What about God's invitations to us ? He has sent us a great many by Jesus Christ. He said the Kingdom of Heaven was like a man giving a great party and sending out invitations ; and He tells how some sent excuses and some did not answer at all.

The Bible is full of God's invitations : " My son, give me thy heart." " Come unto me all ye who labour and are heavy laden." " Follow me." " The Spirit and the Bride say Come ; and let him that heareth say Come ; and he that is athirst, let him Come."

God means His invitations. He cares whether you come or not. He wants an answer. He waits for an answer. There is R.S.V.P. in them all.

Have you answered Him yet ? or is He waiting still ?

Do it Now. Put-off things are forgotten.

Do not say "I'll answer that some day when I'm older, when I'm grown up, when I've time." You have answered all your friends' kind invitations at once, because they were kind and because they wanted an answer.

Answer God's invitations, and at once, for they too are kind and they want an answer; and the answer He wants is yourself.

## RESTS AND MUSIC

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“Come ye apart . . . and rest a while.”—*St. Mark* vi. 31.

Boys and girls who are learning music know what rests are : funny-looking things, like notes that haven't grown up ; ghosts of notes ; notes without any bodies ; mere skeletons or shadows, very different from the plump business-like crotchets and quavers.

One is tempted to think that they don't matter. Notes are sounds, rests are only silence. You can hear notes and listen for them, but can you hear a silence, even if you listen for it ?

Now a good teacher will at once teach you to respect the rests and play them as carefully as the notes, for they are quite as important. A bird's song, it has been said, is made up of a warble and a silence, and the silence is part of the music.

If you watch a man playing a harp, you will see he not only plucks the chords

and makes them sound, but he also keeps laying his hand on them to stop their sound ; and his skill is shown in the one as much as in the other.

Once a man who played the drum applied for a place in a famous orchestra. The conductor put the music of a drum part before him and told him to play it. There were a few bars of notes and then fifty-one bars of rests. He said :

“ I suppose I’ll just skip the rests ? ”

“ No,” said the master, “ the rests are just what I want to hear.”

Rests can be heard. Music without them would not be music. It would weary. Pauses are full of music, and it is intolerable when people neglect to listen for the rests and fill them full of silly chatter.

The master of the music planned the rests as well as the notes, and he wants to hear both.

Now our life is meant to be a beautiful music. The Master of the music is God, and He has written the parts for body and mind and soul, and He has appointed the rests.

Every night He has set a long rest for the body. How we cut in on the rests when it is time to go to bed ! We take a long time to say, " Good-night." We spin it out and steal a bit off the rest.

We only spoil the music, for bodies without rest are weak and fretful and ill.

God knows best, and He wants to hear both the happy music of children's voices and the silence of children's sleep.

Our minds, too, need their rests. I know I don't need to tell children to give fair play and good measure to holidays, for you long for them to begin and are sorry when they end.

But grown-up folks, keen on their work and eager for gain, forget and overdrive their minds and skip the rests. Then they go to a specialist to find out what is wrong, and he tells them they need a rest-cure, and charges them a good stiff fee, and it serves them right !

Most important of all are the rests marked for the soul. One day's rest in seven is marked by the Master of the Music of Life, the Lord's Day, and we are



foolish if we miss that rest and fill it with work or amusement and fuss. The hours of worship, the quiet of the Lord's Supper, the time of prayer, the times when we sit and think quietly—all these are the needful rests of the soul.

They are not time wasted. They are not just empty spaces. They are rests. They are part of the music, which is just an endless noise without them.

They are Jesus saying to our soul—  
“Come ye apart and rest a while.”

*The rests are just what God wants to hear.*

## LIVING WORDS

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“The word was made flesh.”—*St. John i. 14.*

“THE Word was made Flesh.” How can a word be made “Flesh”?

It seems a difficult thing to understand. Many people think it is a strange mystery which has to do with Jesus only, and that there is nothing like it anywhere outside the Gospels and the story of Jesus, and many don't try to understand it at all.

I want to help you to understand it, and so I want to show you that a word becoming flesh is a very common thing.

First, let us go among books.

When Hamlet was reading once he was asked, “What are you reading?” He said, “Words, words, words.”

Well, some books are only “words, words, words,” but some are more: they are words that live. The spirit of the writer has breathed on the words and they have “become Flesh,” so that we talk

and think about the characters as if they were real living people.

When Dickens wants to show us brave unselfishness he paints little Nell, and in little Nell these words come to life and we love them ; when, in the book little Nell dies, Dickens wept, and thousands since then have shed tears over the brave child's death. She was only " words " in a book. Yes ! but the words were living words.

At Aberfoyle there is hanging on a tree outside the town, the coulter of the plough with which Bailie Nicol Jarvie in *Rob Roy* fought the Highlanders and singed their plaids. There never was any such person. He was only " words," but Sir Walter Scott's genius made the words live, so that Jeanie Deans and Bailie Nicol Jarvie and the Antiquary are our friends.

So the Bible, instead of talking about " Faith," shows us Abraham going out at God's command " not knowing whither he went," and that makes us understand better than the word would. It shows us Jesus weeping at Lazarus' grave, and that makes us understand what " Sympathy "

means better than long explanations of the word could do. It shows us Christ on the Cross, and that makes us feel what "Sacrifice" means.

If we go out of the world of books into the world of Life, we find that words have power upon us when they take a body and "become flesh." They have no power while they are only words. "Patriotism" is a word only, but when it took a beautiful body and clothed itself in heather hills, and snow-tipped mountains jewelled with lakes, and hung with silver rivers and garlanded with the sea, it had power to call thousands of Scottish lads from their homes to go out and suffer and die for Scotland in the war.

When it clothed itself with the beautiful fields of England, when it came to earth and wore on its bosom England's moors, and downs and quiet villages, it had power to call the English men to go out on the same great adventure.

It was a word made flesh.

"Love" is just four letters, two consonants and two vowels, and has no

power to make our life noble and unselfish until the word has become "somebody": somebody that loves us, and that we love. "Love" for you means "Father and Mother"; "Love" for them means "You."

Now the Bible tells us "God is Love"—that He loves us; but that is not easy to understand. It isn't really true while it is only a word.

So God made that word "Flesh" so that we couldn't help understanding and so that it should be a mighty word to us. He sent Jesus to earth and Jesus was God's Love become a Person. It was the word become Flesh. If you want to be sure that God is Love, look at Jesus. If you want to know how God loves, look at Jesus.

A little girl was being put to bed by her mother, and, as she turned out the light to go away, the little girl asked her to stay with her. "No," she said, "you've got your dolly and you've got your Teddy-bear." "I don't want Dolly," she said, "and I don't want Teddy. I want someone *with skin on their face!*"

The world was once like that little girl. It was afraid in the dark and wanted to be sure of its Father's Love. It wanted more than words. It wanted living Truth and living Love, and so God made these words Flesh. Jesus came, not to talk about Truth and Love, but to be Himself Truth and Love.

And the end of it all is, that Christ's words must become Flesh in us. What He said is not just to be listened to, it is to be lived. Faith and sacrifice, kindness and sympathy are words that must become Flesh in the lives of Christian folk.

God's word became Flesh in Jesus : His words must become Flesh in you and me.

## GATHERING STICKS

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“The widow woman was there gathering sticks.”—  
1 *Kings* xvii. 10.

I READ lately of an old woman in a Scottish village, called “Grannie” Auchterlonie. For forty years she had been a maid-servant. She saved, but didn’t hoard. She was always ready to help and to give, and her hobby was gathering sticks! She said there was a good deal about gathering sticks in the Bible. It was work, she said, “worthy of an apostle, even of an angel, yes! even of the Risen Lord Himself.”

That was a strange thing to say, but it is entirely true.

There are queer oddments in the Bible. “Old cast clouts and rotten rags,” once helped to deliver a prophet from his dungeon prison; and even gathering sticks shines out as something splendid and full of meaning.

Elijah is sent by God to a widow woman

who has been commanded to care for him. He goes to her and finds her gathering sticks ! It didn't look promising. Perhaps Elijah wondered whether he had made a mistake, or perhaps God.

The poor woman is told by God to receive the prophet and instead of saying " I can't," she makes the best preparation she can : she goes out to gather sticks. That was Faith of a high sort.

Great things can be done on a fire, and much comfort comes from it ; but before any fire is kindled, someone must gather sticks.

It is very humble and commonplace and unexciting, but the fire depends on it.

I look into the picture gallery of the Bible and I see Elijah sleeping, tired out, under a bush in the desert. Shortly an angel will wake him and bid him eat of " a cake baken on the coals." But before that, while the prophet slept, the angel had gathered sticks and made a fire.

Then I see the disciples, after the Crucifixion, on the Lake of Galilee, dispirited and tired and hungry, coming



to land with their empty nets. On the shore they see a figure by a fire with fish broiling on it. It is Jesus, and when they land there is food ready for them. While they were toiling at their fishing-nets, Jesus had been gathering sticks to build a fire for their comfort.

Then I see a shipwrecked, shivering company on the seashore of Malta. They stand cold and cowed in the rain; but one man gathers sticks and builds a fire. It is St. Paul, the great apostle. He did many great and wonderful things. But here he is, the great preacher and writer and church builder, contentedly and practically gathering sticks.

There are many fires we want to see kindled.

We want the fire of love in our homes. It must be fed by little handfuls of kindness, the small fuel of love that keeps the home fire of our hearts burning. Don't wait to do big, splendid things. Keep on gathering sticks and don't let the fire of love fail.

We would like to see a fire of pity and indignation kindled that would burn away

all the cruel things that make so many lives unhappy.

We would like to see the fire of warm religion kindled in all the Church of God, so that frozen faith should thaw, and cold hearts be melted, and the glow of warm, new life be in all our worship and all our work.

It can only be if every one gathers sticks. Bring your prayers, even if they seem frail and dry, and slight and wooden. They are the sticks that make the fire, and if we all bring our own, God will kindle it by the fire of His Holy Spirit. It's no use praying for fire from Heaven if there is nothing for it to kindle when it comes. Gather sticks.

We should never despise any humble task: for we don't know how big a thing it may be part of, or how vast a result may depend even on gathering sticks.

Once Moses picked up a stick and fashioned it to his hand, and thought very little about it. A day came when God bade him go and bring His people out of Egypt. He was afraid. He had no means

or power to do it. God said, "What is that in thy hand?" It was his stick. Nobody could tell him anything new about that. God said "Throw it down;" and when it was cast down before God it became alive. He had picked it up once, hardly thinking, while the sheep grazed. He didn't know that this stick, used at God's command, should become a sceptre of power to do God's will: to bring water from the rock and to command the waves of the sea.

Once in Galilee a woman made up a little parcel for her boy's meal, who would be out all day on the hills shepherding. She thought nothing of it. She had done it often before. But she did it faithfully. And it was well she was faithful, because that day these five small barley loaves were to feed five thousand folk.

Once Jesus kept the Last Supper with His disciples; but before that could be, the servants of the good man of the house had to furnish and prepare that Upper Room.

Had Moses failed to cast down his

stick before God, another must have been the deliverer of Israel.

Had the poor woman failed in her homely task, the hands of Christ must have been empty.

Had the servants failed to make ready the Upper Room, the Church of Christ would have lacked the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

We have all in our hands things we fancy we know all about and think little of, our gifts, our means, our Bibles. We don't know how much can come of them if we would give them to God to use.

Life is full of little, insignificant tasks which we think can't amount to anything. Yet they may and do matter immensely. The widow gathering sticks, the mother of the lad who prepared the parcel Christ used for His miracle, the servant of the house of the Last Supper—they stand in the Bible for the tasks in life that we can only call "gathering sticks," and the use God can make of those who even "in gathering sticks" are faithful.

It would be a pity had the Bible not

given us these pictures of the angel, St. Paul, and our Lord gathering sticks, and life can't afford to lose people who do the same thing.

Gathering the sticks without which no fire is kindled; the quiet, uneventful acts of kindness and love and help, which blaze on no mountain top to dazzle, but which warm the hearts and souls of men and women.

God bless all who gather these sticks! And whether we be ever called to do any great thing or no, may we all be faithful and thankful in gathering sticks.

## THE GREAT CIRCLES OF GOD

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“God led the people about through the way of the wilderness.”—*Exod.* xiii. 18.

Boys and girls who are learning Euclid learn that “the shortest distance between two points is a straight line.”

When you read that you said “Of course it is! Anybody knows that. A straight line must be shorter than a curve. That’s common sense.” And so it is, on paper, or on a map. If you were measuring on a map the distance between Queenstown and New York, you would draw a straight line and measure that. But that would not be the track the steamer would take. That track on the map would be a curve. Why? It looks as if the captain didn’t know his business and was wasting time by going round about. But he does know his own business. He remembers what you have forgotten: that the earth is not a flat thing, but a great round ball, and

the quickest way on a long voyage is not just to go straight ahead, but along what is called "a great circle." It doesn't look the best way, but it is.

I think life, too, has its great circles, when God seems to be leading us round about instead of straight ahead; and we get impatient and wonder if He knows the way.

When He led the people of Israel out of Egypt to the Land of Promise we are told, "God led them not by the way of the Philistines, though that was near . . . but God led the people *about* by the way of the wilderness."

I fancy that must have puzzled them. The way of the Philistines was the near way. It is the way our Army went with General Allenby. Surely the near way must be the best. The most important thing was to get to the Land of Promise as soon as possible. Why was God leading them "about by the way of the wilderness?"

Because God remembered something that they forgot. The thing that mattered

most was not how quickly they should get to the Land of Promise, but what sort of people should get there. They were not fit for the Land of Promise. They were just a crowd of poor-spirited slaves. It was the wilderness that was to harden them and make them into a strong nation. That was why they were led the long way round. It was one of God's "great circles." The quickest way is not always the best: the straight road is not always the shortest.

I remember once when a boy going to climb Ben Lawers, in Scotland, with an old minister. My idea of climbing the mountain was to go straight at it, by my friend started off along the road leaving the mountain quite on one side. I thought it was a stupid business and that it would be the last time I'd go climbing with old men. But after a bit we swung in, and by a big circuit came at last to the top; and looking back I saw what a very hard road I would have taken, and had to confess my old guide knew better than I did.



I find things like this in the teaching of Jesus.

We all want to be happy ; and it seems to us that the best way is just to go straight for our own happiness. Jesus tells us that it isn't. Don't aim at your own happiness. Aim at making other people happy, and you will find your own. The way to get is to give, and " it is more blessed to give than to receive," Jesus says. If you try to save up your life for yourself you'll lose it ; if you spend it for others, as Jesus did, you will find you have saved it. The way to find comfort is not to look for it, but to try and give comfort to others.

It sounds queer. It looks as difficult to believe as that a curve on a map is really shorter than a straight line ; but it is true. Try it, and see.

Our Father knows the best way for us to climb the hill of character ; He knows the best course across the sea of life to the harbour on the other side ; He knows the best track for us to the Land of Promise.

We must trust our Father, even if His

way seems to lead us round about, even if it leads us by the way of the wilderness when we would prefer the soft, lazy way of the Philistines.

In the end, those who trusted God will bless the hand that guided, for God's "great circles" in the end lead us surely home.

## THE COMPANIONS OF TRUTH

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“ Speaking the truth in love.”—*Eph. iv. 15.*

To speak the truth seems a plain straightforward duty which only requires courage.

It requires more than courage, and here is a story to show what else it needs.

One day Truth appeared in the Palace of the Gods, very ragged and dripping wet.

“ Well, my daughter,” said Jupiter, “ I thought you had gone to live on earth among men. You have not stayed long.”

“ No,” said Truth, “ I was disappointed at my reception in fact. I went first to the palace of the Emperor, and he welcomed me. But when I told him that he had won his throne by wholesale murder and kept it by tyranny and fraud, and that his family could only follow him if his people were baser than himself, he was angry. And as he threatened to cut out my tongue, I left him in rather a hurry, and went to the nobility.”

“ And they received you with joy and listened to you ? ”

“ Yes, for a time. So long as I spoke about the Emperor, they heard me gladly ; and when I spoke about the common people’s faults they applauded. But when I told them they were vain, and arrogant and luxurious, and that they thought of their own pleasures far more than of their country’s good, they planned to have me assassinated. So I left them and went to the priests.”

“ And they were glad to see you, doubtless ? ”

“ They were so glad to see me and set such a high value upon Truth, that they wanted to keep me altogether to themselves, and proposed to chain me in an underground dungeon, without light, and keep me there for life. So I fled to the philosophers.”

“ And the philosophers ? ”

“ They wouldn’t listen to me at all. They had their minds made up about everything already, said I was a nuisance and hinted that I was an impostor. So I

gave them up and went to the labouring folk."

"And what reception did they give you?"

"They were delighted with me when I told them how they were oppressed and cheated out of their rights. They would have listened for ever while I told them of the pride and vices of the nobles, and the greed and selfishness of the rich. But when I told them that many of their miseries were due to their own fault; that they were poorer than they needed to be because they flung their money away on gambling; and wasted what might have clothed their children and made their homes comfortable, on drink, they were most indignant, and would have burnt me alive if the priests hadn't been beforehand with them. As it was I was badly singed and only escaped by jumping into a deep well. And now I have come back to obtain permission to remain at the bottom of my well."

"But, my daughter," said Jupiter, "Truth at the bottom of a well will not be of much service to mankind."

"No, father," said Truth, "nor in the middle of a fire either."

"I fear you have been too downright and outspoken."

"I would not be Truth if I were not ; I would only be Flattery. Let whoso wishes to seek me, come to my well and peer down."

"No," said Jupiter, "you will not go back to your well. Man needs Truth, but Truth needs two companions. I give them now to you and send you back to earth. You will succeed with them, for Truth alone is not sufficient. What do you think of them ? "

"Oh ! father, how beautiful is this one ! how gentle ! her footfall is hardly heard, and her touch is like a kind caress. What is her name ? "

"Her name is Discretion, or for short men call her Tact."

"And this other ! How genial is her smile ! how kind her eyes ! How patient and hopeful her eyes ! Her name ? "

"Good Nature. Be sure to take them with you always, for men will always be glad to welcome Truth when Discretion and Good Nature come with her."

That is a fable, written by a wise man,\* which gives the meaning of a word of St. Paul. In one of his letters he wishes his friends to "grow up into Christ," and the way he says is by "speaking the truth in Love."

Truth is not always spoken "in love," and the pity of it is that then it makes man hate Truth.

You are all growing up in years. Your friends wish you to grow up "into Christ," into His likeness; and the most beautiful feature of His likeness is that He always spoke the Truth in Love. The Truth on Jesus' lips was never unkind, because it was always loving. The Pharisees told sinful men and women that they were sinners, but it was proud and unkind truth, and it made them worse. Jesus told them the same thing, but in His own way, and it made them sorry for sin and anxious for goodness.

It is to Jesus we must go to learn to "grow up speaking the truth"; but above all it is to Jesus we must go to learn to be kind kindly, and while always speaking the truth, to speak the Truth "in Love."

\*Richard Garnett, "The Twilight of the Gods."

## THE BELT WRESTLERS

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“ Who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? ”—  
*Rom.* vii. 24.

IN Stockholm there stands in front of the museum a very striking group of statuary called “ The Belt Wrestlers.” It is two men fastened together by a belt. They have knives in their hands. They cannot get separate from each other. They must fight until one wins. There can be no peace, no drawn battle. It is a fight to the death.

As statuary it wins your admiration ; as something more than statuary it makes you think.

For it is a picture of our life. There are two in every one of us, a better self and a worse self. They are bound together and one has got to win the victory.

Robert Louis Stevenson has written a queer creepy story about this called “ Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.”



It tells how Dr. Jekyll, thinking about these things, found a drug which could separate his better self and his worse self. One day he made the experiment; but because he was thinking how he might follow wicked pleasures without being found out, it was the badness in him which took shape. He found himself changed into a little ugly evil man, wholly bad, whom he called "Mr. Hyde."

For awhile he enjoyed it. By day he was the respected, quiet-living Dr. Jekyll. Then, with evening, one drink of the drug and he was Mr. Hyde, wholly wicked and eager for the forbidden pleasures of sin.

But always it became easier to change into Mr. Hyde, and harder to change back into Dr. Jekyll.

One morning he woke and found he had changed in his sleep. One day he changed, without the drug, when he was wide awake.

At last the drug failed him, and he couldn't get back at all. He remained Mr. Hyde, and the judgment of Mr. Hyde's wickedness found him out.

This is more than a story. It is the truth

of our life. There were two Davids : one who loved God and sang His praises, another who sent a brave soldier to his death, that he might steal his wife. And they were both David.

There were two Peters : one who loved Jesus and would fight and die for Him ; another who swore like a coward that he had never known Jesus. And they were both Peter.

There were two Pauls : one who knew the good and wanted to do it : and one who went and did the evil. Both were Paul. He says of himself : “ I, yet not I.”

A French writer tells us of a man called Tartarin of Tarascon, who had two sides to him, two spirits in him. One was all for adventure and danger, climbing mountains, facing tempests, hunting lions. The other was all for feather beds and good dinners, a soft chair by the fire and woolly bed socks to sleep in.

We are all like Tartarin, and David, and Peter, and Paul, and Dr. Jekyll, two natures tugging in different directions ; belt wrestlers bound together in the belt of our body.

The Frenchman who wrote about Tartarin, said about himself: "Oh! This other me! How it daunts, and dares, and shames me!"

We all know them both. On Sunday morning, the one says: "Now for the House of God and His worship"; the other says: "Now for a long lie and breakfast in bed."

I asked a little girl why she came to church; she said: "Because I am made to go, and besides I like to come." You see, there were the two in her: the one that wasn't willing to come, and the one that wanted to.

And the best won *because there was somebody to help it.*

We come into the world like parcels labelled: "Right side up with care." There is trouble and confusion if the wrong side gets uppermost, and the right side needs care to keep it uppermost.

We are like the belt-wrestlers. The good and the bad are at war, and one has got to win outright.

But there is Some one to help the good

in its fight, Someone Who cares to keep our right side uppermost until the bad is beaten and dead.

He helped Peter and Paul, and everyone who will let Him help. When Paul says : " I, yet not I," he adds one word more which tells the secret of victory : " I yet not I—Christ."

## THE LIVING WAY

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"How can we know the way? . . . I am the Way."—  
*St. John* xiv. 5, 6.

WHAT a strange thing to say!

How can anybody be "a way"? Surely the most anybody can do is to tell you the way; but *to be* the way, how is that possible?

Well, it is possible, and Jesus said what He said just to make us feel the difference between His telling the way and His being the way.

Suppose that your father has sent you with a message to some place a good way across the city. You know the direction, but you don't know the way. Of course, you ask a policeman, and he tells you—

"First — to — the — right — third — to — the — left — past — the — cross-roads — turn — by — the — church — over — the — bridge — past — the — bowling-green — fourth — to — the — left — second — to —

the — right — straight — on — and — there —you —are ! ”

It's all quite true, but it's rather too much ; like finding you have pulled the shower-bath when you only meant to ring the bell, or opening a drawer to get a handkerchief and the whole drawer and all its contents have come out on the top of you.

You say “ Thank you,” feebly. You want to say “ Tell me it slowly,” but you don't like to for fear of another deluge ; so you start off, and very soon you have forgotten and are at a loss again.

You ask a passer-by that looks kind. “ Oh ! yes,” he says, “ I'm going that way. Take my hand and come along.”

Your worries are ended : he *is* the way.

In France, soldiers were moved about a great deal, and they didn't always know where they were going, only the time of starting.

I used to be very inquisitive and wanted to know. “ Oh, it's all right ! ” I would be told. “ General Harper knows : we start at 4 a.m.”

It was all right ; our general knew the way.

What a difference it makes what sort of companion you have on a road !

It may be a beautiful walk, but if you have a dull companion it is spoilt. He is the way and he makes it dull. But with a bright companion the dull road is bright and the long road short.

When I was a boy there was an old man who took us walks in the country. With him we never tired. He knew the way ; we hadn't to puzzle it out. He showed us all the treasures of the way, things we should never have seen if we had been alone. He told us how the hills were made, the names of the birds, the mosses on the stones, the beetles under them, the flowers by the road-side.

Had we been alone we should have been noticing our legs and the milestones, and would have been soon tired. As it was, we went far without knowing it. He was the way.

Now a long way is before you, the

long high-road of Life with the milestones of the years along it, to the city of God.

Lots of people will give directions how to go, hard to understand, hard to remember. It is all very difficult.

“ How can we know the way ? ”

Jesus is the Way. He says, “ Come with me. I’m going your way. Take my hand.”

It’s a long way without Him. It’s a dull road without Him. It’s an anxious road without Him. You fear what is round the next corner, and at the cross-roads you wonder which way to take, and it is easy to go wrong.

But with Him, you don’t need to know what is round the corner between to-day and to-morrow : He knows. You don’t need to worry whether you are on the right road : you must be, if you are with Him. He will make it full of interest and reveal all the hidden joys which we should miss if He didn’t teach us to see. And we can be sure that He leads us home in the end.

The road of Life is before you.

“ How can we know the way ? ”



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You can't, for you are too young ; but  
you needn't, for Jesus says to you and  
me—

“ I am the Way.”

## IN AN AQUARIUM

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“Keep thy heart above all keeping, for out of it are the issues of life.”—*Prov.* iv. 23 (margin).

I WONDER if any of the boys and girls who read these pages have ever tried to make a sea-aquarium.

If they have not, perhaps it will make them keen to try it on their next seaside holiday ; if they have, it may recall the pleasure theirs gave them : for this is the story of an aquarium and what happened to it.

Getting it together was great fun. It meant exploring unknown pools and feeling all the excitement of discoverers ; searching among the sea-weed fringes ; studying long and quietly the beautiful sea-gardens of the pools, to mark and catch some shy inmate lurking out of sight ; bringing each new captive to find its name and giving it a nickname that fitted it better.

At last it was finished. The bowl was

charged with water, the sea-weeds with their stone anchors lowered into place, clean gravel dropped in, stones arranged, and all our captives put into their new home.

There was one stickleback with a gorgeous read waistcoat and a most inquisitive spirit who inspected everything, and had gingerly bites at most things. A hermit crab that climbed about and kept tumbling everywhere like a foolish clown. A common crab that prowled about and, when not prowling, sat and twiddled his thumbs. A prawn with great goggle eyes and long feelers that jerked about like a staring startled ghost. Four sea anemones that waved their restless fingers and were avoided by everything else. Acorn barnacles that kept shooting out feathery clutching hands. A most uninteresting limpet, and a wandering silver willy.

When the sun shone on it big bubbles of oxygen formed on the sea-weeds like diamonds, and it was a perpetual delight to sit and watch the beauty and colour and wonder of it all.

One day a new treasure was found—a

sea-urchin. A touch showed that it was not just an empty shell, so in he went into the aquarium.

Alas, next morning, what a change ! The crystal clear water was dim and dull. The stickleback lay dead. The hermit-crab had come out of his shell, and he, too, lay dead. Common crab, prawn, anemones, limpet—all were dead, and the weeds drooped dully like funeral plumes, their lustre gone, their air-jewels vanished.

What had happened ?

Why, this. The sea-urchin was already dead when we found him, and, for lack of care and knowledge, we had introduced death into our little sea-world. The one evil thing had destroyed our little garden of Eden.

So we learned our lesson, for an aquarium demands pure water. One source of decay is enough to corrupt and destroy all its beautiful life.

And your heart, boys and girls, is just like the aquarium—like it in its wonder, its beauty, its sensitiveness, and its need to be kept from anything that is impure. For

the impure thought, the impure desire will not lie quiet and keep itself to itself. It will diffuse poison, and if it be not taken in time, bring all to ruin and shame.

Judas must have had much good in him or Jesus would not have chosen him and trusted him. But one evil desire poisoned his whole soul and made him the world's traitor.

Shakespeare tells us of Macbeth, who was a brave and honest soldier, but he let a wrong ambition creep into his heart, and it killed all his virtues and made him a murderer and cruel tyrant.

History tells us of Francis Bacon, the great Chancellor of England, famous, learned, trusted. But among all his gifts there lurked the poison of greed, and it spread its infection over his whole mind and dragged his honour to death, so that he took bribes and sold justice, and fell from the highest honour, to disgrace and fine and imprisonment.

It is all just like the story of the aquarium—the one corrupt evil thing bringing all to ruin.

So the Bible says : “ Keep thy heart above all keeping, for out of it are the issues of life.”

Better still, it says : “ My son, give me thy heart ” ; for we may let in the evil thing unknowing, but Christ Who knows will keep your heart safe from all evil, if you will only give it into His keeping.

## THE INSPIRING TOUCH

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“ If I may but touch His clothes.”—*St. Mark* v. 28.

BARRETT BROWNING, the son of Robert Browning the great poet, tells how when he was a boy he was with his father in Paris, when an old man passed by.

The father said, “ Touch that old man, as he passes, I’ll tell you why afterwards.” The boy wondered, for there seemed nothing special about the old man. He was bowed and bent, and shabby, and shuffled as he went.

But he knew his father had some good reason, so he reached out his hand and touched the old man softly.

“ Now,” said the boy’s father, “ you have touched Béranger, and you must never forget that.”

Who was Béranger ? Well, you know who Burns was : the poet who sang his songs of liberty and independence to the soul of Scotland. Béranger was the Burns of

France. He sang freedom into the soul of France ; and Browning wanted his son to touch him, so that he could feel he had touched one of the great servants of freedom.

Can we touch the great men that are dead and gone ? Yes ! we can touch their minds with our own, through their books, which is more than touching their bodies. We can touch Burns and Sir Walter Scott and Shakespeare and Dickens, and as often as we touch them we are helped to be true and brave, generous and kindly ; helped to see the good in men and women, and to be patient with their failings and foolishness.

Can we touch Jesus ?

We read in the Gospels how a poor woman once said to herself, " If I may but touch His garment, I shall be made whole," and she was healed by the touch of Him.

We would like to do that. We envy those who could touch the living hand of Jesus. We long for " the touch of a vanished hand." Do we long in vain ? No.

We can read His words in the Gospels and learn to think His thoughts, and touch His



mind with our own, so as to have in us "that mind which was in Christ Jesus."

We can touch His heart with our prayers. No prayer of need ever failed to touch the heart of Jesus when He was on earth, and the Bible tells us He is still the same. "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities."

But better still, we can touch Him through acts of kindness.

There was a soldier once in France called Tavannes who had a brother he loved dearly. And his war-cry was "who touches my brother touches Tavannes."

Jesus said something like that, when He said "inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me." There are many legends which tell us this.

St. Francis of Assisi walking one day in the country met a poor leper. Every one was sorry for the lepers, but none were sorry enough to touch them. They were afraid for themselves. But St. Francis was so sorry that he never thought of himself at all, but put his arms about the leper and

kissed his poor spoiled face. And when he looked round again, the roadway was empty, and he knew he had touched the Lord.

St. Martin of Tours one day saw a shivering half-clad beggar whose limbs shook under their scanty rags in the winter wind. Taking a sword from a soldier he cut his own wide cloak in two and gave half to the beggar.

In the night he had a dream, and saw the courts of Heaven and Jesus on His Throne. Round His shoulders was the half-robe he had given to the beggar, and St. Martin knew that it was not a dream, but that he, too, had touched the Lord.

This story is told of the fourth wise man who followed the Star of Bethlehem with the jewels to offer to Jesus.

He was delayed on the road by a wounded man whom thieves had left for dead. He tended him and saw him into safety, and after a while left him, giving the inn-keeper for all expenses one of the jewels he had meant for Jesus.

So he arrived late at Bethlehem. Jesus

was gone with Mary and Joseph to Egypt, and Herod's soldiers were massacring the children. One he was able to rescue from a soldier's sword and return to its frantic mother, but to do this he had to bribe the soldier with another of the jewels he had meant for Jesus.

He went to Egypt and there fell ill, and a good poor woman tended him and nursed him back to health again. One day he found her in tears. Her only son, her one support, had been taken for the army, and she was in despair.

The Wise Man could not forget her kindness and so he bought her son out of the army, with the last of the jewels he had meant for Jesus, and gave up the hope of ever seeing Jesus at all. He had nothing to offer Him now.

After thirty years he thought he would go back to his old home, and in his journey he reached Jerusalem on the day Jesus was to be crucified. Hearing this he stood in the crowd hoping at least to *see* Jesus.

But as he stood, a heavy tile fell from a roof and killed him.

So you say his life was a failure. He had never given his gifts to Jesus, never even seen Him.

But when his soul was borne to Heaven, he saw Jesus on His Throne, and lo ! in the front of His crown were the jewels the wise man had given to help the sorrows of men and women. He too had touched the Lord, because he had touched the Lord's brethren.

When we touch another in kindness we touch Christ : and the kindnesses done to men for Christ's sake on earth are the jewels in Christ's crown in Heaven.

## GUARDING THE CROWN

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“ Hold fast . . . that no man take thy crown.”—*Rev.*  
iii. 11.

THERE is one place in London all boys and girls, who have learned history, want to see : it is the Tower.

And in the Tower there is one thing above all others they want to see : it is the Crown. When you see it, you will find it very safely guarded. It, with the other jewels, will be found in a strong room by itself, with a burly warder in charge. Moreover it is in a glass case which is in a strong steel cage, and round this cage is an iron railing so that you cannot even touch the cage. There is no fear of any man “ taking ” that crown : it is too well guarded.

But once it was carelessly guarded, for nobody dreamed that anyone would dare to steal the crown. But carelessness invites the thief, and the attempt was once made to steal the crown of the British Empire, and it nearly succeeded.

It was in the reign of Charles II. A great rascal, called Colonel Blood, who had been one of Cromwell's soldiers, came disguised as a jolly country clergyman, with his wife to see the sight of the Tower. They were very interested in the Crown Jewels, and stayed so long looking at them that Colonel Blood's wife fainted and had to be taken into the house of the warder, an old man called Edwards.

A friendship sprang up and the country clergyman proposed a marriage between his nephew and Edwards' daughter. A day was appointed for the young man to come and make the acquaintance of his bride that was to be.

They came, and with it once more the beaming and benevolent country clergyman with three friends. After some talk, he asked that his friends might see the crown, and the old man, unsuspecting, unlocked the door and led the way into the Crown Room.

In a moment his head was muffled in the clergyman's gown, a blow on the head with a pistol silenced his cries, and he lay

senseless on the floor while the villains seized the crown and made off.

They had even reached the outer gate when a strange chance saved the crown. Edwards had a sailor son who had been away at sea for five years. That day he was arriving home unexpectedly, and when he reached the Tower gate, he saw the thieves running and heard his old father, who had recovered his senses, shouting " Treason ! Treason ! The crown is taken ! "

The sailor seized Colonel Blood, other keepers came running. A scuffle took place. The crown rolled in the mud, and some of its jewels fell from their setting and were brought in by a sweep the next day. But the crown was saved ; and ever since that day it has been so well guarded that no man will try again " to take " the crown.

But the days in which we live have seen many crowns rolling in the dust. The Czar, Nicholas of Montenegro, the Kaiser, the Austrian Emperor, Ferdinand of Bulgaria, Constantine of Greece—all have had their crowns taken from them. The Czar and

King Nicholas lost theirs because they were not strong enough to keep them. The others lost theirs because evil pretended to be good and their vanity listened. Selfish ambition came to the German and Austrian Kaisers, and persuaded them that they should conquer the world for its own good. They listened and lost their crowns. Ferdinand and Constantine persuaded themselves that treachery and dishonesty were the best policy for their people, and they lost their crowns.

Always it is so : evil never comes as evil, but with another face, disguised, and with good words on its lips, just as Colonel Blood pretended to be one of God's ministers, and those who let themselves be deceived, learn too late that their crown is taken.

What about you, boys and girls ? You are neither kings nor kaisers, but you have a crown because you are the children of the Heavenly King.

Its jewels are more precious than the jewels in King George's crown, for they are, Love of father and mother, God's Love, the



Love of friends, Self-respect, Good Conscience, Honour, Truth, Kindness ; never were jewels like them !

But you must watch, or your crown will be taken. “ Hold fast that thou hast, that no man take thy crown.”

Evil desires and wicked passions will plan and plot to get into your heart, wearing fair disguises, and you will need to learn of Christ to know the good from the evil, and to guard your crown.

Let God be your strong Tower, and let Christ be its Keeper.

Hold fast to the things you have now, to your prayers, your Bible, your worship, and you will keep your crown—a crown of life in this world, and in the world to come “ a crown of glory that fadeth not away.”

## GATHERING SHELLS

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“He that followeth Me . . . shall have the light of life.”  
—*St. John* viii. 12.

EVERY year the month of September sees thousands of happy boys and girls at the seaside ; and thousands at home with happy memories of their August holiday by the sea.

Those who are at the sea will find delight in gathering shells, and a large part of the memories of those who are home again will be in the shape of the shells they have brought with them.

It is about shells I wish to speak. How wonderful they are ! Who taught the shell-fish the mysterious mathematics by which they build up their exquisite spirals and wonderful whorls so neatly and with such strength ?

We don't know how they do it. We only know that the shell grows as the shell-fish grows, for it is only hermit-crabs that

borrow cast-off shells. The real shell-fish make their own. There is no housing problem in their wonderful world.

And we know something about their colours, and that is what I want to tell you.

Not many of the shells of our northern waters are highly coloured ; but if you go to the tropical seas the shells are ablaze with colour. They are glorious with purples and crimsons, reds and yellows, and a thousand shades which make our most gorgeous pictures look pale in comparison. It is as if God had said to these creatures what He once said to the city of Zion : “ I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and thy foundations with sapphires.”

Why is it ?

It is the work of Light. The water is so clean and clear that they live in the light.

With us the water is not clear, and our shells are dull coloured. Only the few which live in the shallow, clear water of the margin are brightly or delicately coloured. With them the light gets a chance to paint its pictures.

But in the tropics the sea is clear as crystal, and the long fingers of the sunlight can reach down into the depths, and touch the shells and make them beautiful.

And so, as the shell-fish grows, its shell grows, too, not only in size, but in beauty of colour, because it lives in the light, and the light has its chance.

Now I think your soul is like the shell of the shell-fish.

We can't make our souls beautiful ; it is only God that can do that, and it depends on what part of the Sea of Life we choose to live in whether He has a chance to do it.

I don't mean whether we are rich or poor, or whether we live in town or country. That has nothing to do with it. But whether we choose to live in the clear light of God.

We can choose that. The shell-fish has no choice, and we don't blame an oyster for having a mud-coloured shell. He has to live in muddy water. He can't help it.

But you can. Some people live in muddy

waters, and they have muddy souls. It is their own fault, because it is their own choice.

If you choose muddy and unclean talk ; if you read muddy and unclean books ; if you think muddy and unclean thoughts, then you will have muddy souls. The beauty that might be, can't be, because you are living where God's Light cannot touch your soul to make it beautiful.

But if you live among the things and words and books and thoughts that are true and clean and clear, then God's light has free course to touch your soul with all the beauty He has designed for it.

Light is the great artist. Give him a chance and he will paint flowers and shells as none other can, but his most beautiful work is when he uses the colours of God's truth and love and purity to adorn a human soul.

So when you gather shells and find the most beautiful in the clear water, remember that God is gathering souls, and that He will find the fairest ones where the sea of life is clear and clean, and the Light of the

World has had His chance to clothe them in His own beauty.

Jesus said " I am the Light of the World ; he that followeth Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life." Therefore, follow Jesus ; and your life and spirit shall be filled with the strength and glory of the light.

## TWO CLOCKS

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“There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.”—1 *Cor.* xii. 6.

THIS is the story of two clocks. One stood in the hall of the house like a grave warder or a stern old sentinel. It was a tall grandfather clock with a dark case and a sober face and a very slow and solemn tick. Like Longfellow's “Clock on the Stairs,” it seemed to say, “Forever—Never; Never—Forever.” As you listened to it you felt that Time was a very solemn thing, and when it struck the hour, its slow notes went echoing through the house like bells that tolled to say, “Another hour is dead and gone forever.” It ticked one tick to the second, sixty to the minute, year in year out, and it had done it for a hundred years.

Nor was it any wonder that it thought a good deal of itself and thought it knew everything. It heard people telling how old it was, and admiring its case.

Adapted from “The Morning Watch” (1901).

Now, once it had to go off for a visit to the clock-maker, and while it was away a new-comer came to the kitchen. This was a cheery little clock with a bright and shining face. It struck the hours with a joyous ringing note, which seemed to say "Hurrah! a new hour is born, a new hour with sixty golden minutes of happiness. Get busy and enjoy them." Its tick tripped along on the lightest of feet, dancing through the minutes as if it felt Time was a glad and splendid thing.

The old clock came back after awhile to its place in the hall, and was more dignified than ever, for it had been much admired at the clock-maker's.

When it heard this strange sound coming from the kitchen it was puzzled and annoyed. Here was something new! "And in *my* house too!"

It decided to ignore it, and much preferred when the kitchen door was shut.

One day the kitchen clock said, "Good morning, I am the new kitchen clock."

But the old clock said nothing.



The new-comer tried again. "Good-morning, I'm glad you're back. We all missed you."

At this the old clock unbent and said stiffly, "*What* did you say you were?"

"The new kitchen clock."

"Oh! indeed! I thought it was a new egg beater or something. What are you making that odd irritating noise for?"

"Oh! that's my tick, I am telling the time."

"Don't be absurd. There is only one way of telling the time, one tick to the second and sixty ticks to the minute. That's the correct way. *My* way, 'TICK-TICK,' like that. Your way, '*Tick-tick-tick-tick*,' is not dignified. It's not decent. It doesn't help people to be serious. It's flippant and irreverent. It's not right. You tick four to my one, and I suppose when I say it's one o'clock you'll say it's four o'clock."

"Well," said the new clock, "I want people to be happy. And after all if we agree at the end of every minute and at every hour, it's all right surely."

"No it isn't. I'm a hundred years

old, and I tell you if we don't agree in every tick we don't agree at all."

"But," said the other, "though I tick 240 to the minute and you tick 60, yet if we finish the minute at the same time we do agree."

"How can 240 be the same as 60?"

"But 240 quarter seconds *are* the same as 60 whole seconds. That's arithmetic, and you can work it out and see."

"It's impudence and new-fangled nonsense, and I won't. You must draw the line somewhere, and if you once allow anybody to start ticking four times instead of once to the second we'll have things calling themselves clocks and ticking eight and sixteen and goodness knows what to the second."

"Well," said the kitchen clock timidly, "why not?"

"It won't do. It's not done. It never has been done. I tell you once for all, my way is the only way. We don't agree and we can't be friends. You may have the face of a clock, and the figures of a clock, and the hands of a clock, and a bell with

the voice of an angel, and people may cook by you and catch trains by you, but I say you are not a clock at all ! ”

And therewith the old clock tolled out the hour as if he were ringing the funeral knell over the little clock's grave.

. . . . .

That night the master of the house said, “ Put back the kitchen clock ten minutes : it's fast by the hall clock.” And the hall clock nearly burst its door open with satisfaction.

But the next evening when the master of the house came back, he said, “ The hall clock was ten minutes slow and the kitchen clock right ; and I lost my train. I wonder how that happened.”

. . . . .

A little later the kitchen door was opened and the old clock hailed the new one.

“ Little neighbour,” he said, “ I have been thinking things over, and I want to be friends with you. I lost time because I lost my temper. I see you were right.

There are different ways of telling the time, and the only thing that matters is that we tell the right time."

And then, just to prove it, they struck the hour together, and the serious note of the old clock mingled sweetly with the cheery note of the new clock, for, each in his own way, was telling the same time. It was a striking agreement.

Boys and girls there are many ways of worshipping God, and many sorts of Christian Churches, and many ways of serving Christ. There is no one of which we can say it is the only one and the only way. We can't all agree in everything. What matters is that we agree in the great things; that our hands point true to the hours of God, and our hearts beat true to Jesus Christ.

## THE CONDITIONAL MOOD

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"If . . . not . . . then . . ."—1 Cor. xv. 14.

ONE of Shakespeare's fools—who were very wise men—says, "There is much virtue in an 'if' ;" and so there is.

We say, "If 'ifs' were horses, beggars would ride ;" "If ifs and an's were pots and pans, what would be the use of tinkers ?"

"If" is the key by which imagination unlocks the gates of golden worlds. The poor man says, "*If* I were rich !" The stupid boy says, over his lessons, "*If* I were clever." The unfortunate man says, "*If* I were lucky." And so they go sailing away on the wings of fancy into a dream world where all is right and nothing is wrong, where everything is easy and nothing difficult. And often these flights of fancy come down again to hard earth and hard facts with a disconcerting bump.

Do you remember the porter in the

*Arabian Nights*? He had put all his little money into a trayful of glass dishes, and sat down by the roadside with his tray before him to wait for purchasers. And as he waited, he dreamed away on the wings of "if." "Now, if I sell this trayful for so much, then I shall buy twice as much, and sell again. Soon I shall buy a house and shop, and make more money. Then I will buy camels and send my caravans to India and Egypt, and become a great man. I shall ride on a white ass with cloth of gold, and when a man comes to me with a petition, I shall kick out my foot and spurn him." And his dream was so real to him that he kicked out his foot, and crash! over went the tray, and he was poorer than when he began to dream!

Girls and boys, "ifs" like that never did anything, and we can never dream a new world or a new soul into existence.

"Do noble things, not dream them all day long." It's a poor thing to waste our time in idle dreams. "If" can be a poor helper.

But, still, it is good to go off with "if" and look at the other side of things. It is a good exercise for our mind and can help us.

During the war we often thought, "*If* Germany were to win," and the picture "if" showed us was so terrible that we pulled our resolve tighter and determined Germany must not win. So St. Paul said, to people who were not sure that Christ was risen from the dead and did not think it mattered, "*If* Christ be not risen, then——" He paints the picture, and it is so dreadful that we come back from it and say with a new thankfulness, "But now is Christ risen."

Now listen to "if" on the lips of Jesus. What a wonderful world He opens up for us! He says, "*If* ye have faith even as a grain of mustard seed"—why then everything is possible. "*If* any man drink of the water I shall give him," he shall have a fountain of refreshment in his own soul always.

"*If* ye do whatsoever I command you, ye are my friends."

“ *If* ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in my love.”

“ *If* a man love me, he will keep my words, and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him.”

“ *If* ye ask anything in my name I will do it.”

“ *If* any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come into him.”

“ *If* I go and prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, ye may be also.”

What a wonderful world of power and peace, and happiness, and hope ! and only “ *if* ” stands between it and us.

These are not just dreams ; they are the promises of Jesus.

There is a song which says :

“ If is a Fairy who comes at night.

She takes what is wrong, and puts it right ;

And Life is an Ogre who makes you know

It's always an ‘ *if* ’ and it's never ‘ *so*.’ ”

But in every tale there is a Prince who conquers the Ogre and makes “ *If* ” into “ *So* ” ; and the Prince for us is the Lord



Jesus. He says "if" because He means it to be "so," and we have only to take His hand and give Him our heart and it will be "so."

"If I come to Jesus,  
Happy I shall be,  
He is gently calling  
Little ones like me."

"If!" Boys and girls, how long is it to be only "*If*"?

## HOW A STAR WAS FOUND

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“ They took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.”—*Acts* iv. 13.

I WANT to tell the girls and boys the strange story of how two men discovered a new world in the heavens.

If you look into the skies you see thousands of stars, which are so far away that the biggest telescope can't tell us anything more about them.

They are very far away, and they are fixed.

But you see also some stars that do not twinkle, but shine steadily and move through the heavens. They are called planets and they move in huge circles round the sun. Jupiter and Saturn can often be seen, and Jupiter is very bright ; and seen through a telescope they are wonderful, Jupiter with his many moons, and Saturn with his rings.

Now for a long time it was thought Uranus was the farthest planet from the sun. But there was a strange thing about Uranus. All the planets keep exact time. You know exactly where to find them at a given time. They move in their vast ellipses more punctually than any train. As the Psalm says, "because He is mighty of power, not one faileth."

Well, Uranus didn't fail. But sometimes he was ahead of his time, and farther forward than it seemed he ought to be.

This puzzled the astronomers. Something was pulling Uranus forward.

Two men, Adams and Le Verrier, in London, and in Paris, began to work out the problem. It was such a sum as you wouldn't care to have in your home lessons for it took two years to do! They had to calculate where and how big was the unseen world which was affecting Uranus: and at last they finished their task and said, "if you point a telescope at such a place and at such a time, you will find a new world."

And it was so. A great planet, eighty-

five times the size of our earth, that no one had seen till then, was found, and named Neptune. And it was only sought for and found because a cause had to be found to explain the behaviour of Uranus.

This story makes me think of what happened long ago with the disciples at Antioch. In many things they were just ordinary men, poor, unlearned, timid ; but sometimes they were different from other men. They were ahead of them in boldness, and patience, and love for others. They were nearer to God. It wasn't natural. It was more than natural.

People wondered what was the cause of it. Something unseen was drawing them. What could it be ?

The people looked carefully. They found another world, the unseen kingdom of Heaven. They found another star that was influencing them, the " Morning Star," Jesus Christ ! " They took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus."

It was the difference in their lives that made people look behind them, and find the unseen Jesus, just as the difference in

Uranus made Adams and Le Verrier look behind it and find Neptune.

Again, you see Saul of Tarsus set in a steady course of life, then suddenly changed, becoming gentle instead of cruel, humble instead of proud, a Christian instead of a persecutor of Christians.

These things make us look for their cause, and looking we find this cause is Jesus.

There are lives like that. This world does not explain them. You have got to look beyond this world for the explanation, and the explanation is Jesus. Another unseen world is drawing them ahead of others in kindness and goodness and love—the kingdom of Heaven.

Girls and boys, our lives should be like that : so lifted up and drawn on by love to Jesus, so moved by Him, that they make people look at you, and then beyond you, and see Jesus. Nothing more wonderful can happen to anybody ; and it may happen to all of us ; to so love Jesus and be so ruled by Him, that without knowing it, we set others looking for the cause until they find the cause is Christ.

## THE ACORN BARNACLE

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“He coveteth greedily all the day long.”—*Prov.* xxi. 26.

I WANT to tell the girls and boys who read this, the story of a little creature whose home is in the sea. It is called the Acorn Barnacle. It is found spotting the rocks everywhere up to the tide-mark, and thickly clustered on the timbers of piers and jetties. It is like a tiny limpet, but it is not a limpet at all ; a limpet can travel, but this is fixed down hard to the rock or timber where you find it.

Its shape is like a tiny model of a volcano, cone-shaped with an open top, and inside the top are two hard lips that open and shut continually. When they open there comes out a feathery hand, which clutches and vanishes again ; and all the day long this clutching hand keeps busy. “It coveteth greedily all the day long.”

The acorn barnacle is not beautiful to look at, nor is it pleasant to walk upon with

bare feet, as plenty of children have found out ; but it has a wonderful life story.

In the beginning of its life—so I have read—it starts with a beautiful little complete body. It can swim and move about as it chooses. It can see and enjoy the light. It can touch and learn things needful. But since the first far-off ancestor who began it, the acorn barnacle has taken an evil way.

It settles down on a rock and holds on. Then it builds up round itself a hard wall to keep everything else away from it. Then it shapes the two hard lips, the doors of its house, doors also meant to shut quickly and let nothing in. Meanwhile its whole body changes. All its powers are lost one by one. Its sight goes and it is blind. It cannot leave its little fortress, so some of its limbs change into a thing for holding on ; and the rest change into the little hand that continually grasps and grasps, and grasps—coveting greedily all the day long. Its body has practically been deformed into a monstrous hand. It has chosen to get, not to give ; and there it is now dead to

light and beauty of the sea-world ; powerless to move, walled round, a self-made prisoner in the prison of its own building, hard-lipped, hideous, greedy.

Now, whether this be true or not of the acorn barnacle, it is a tremendous parable on the doom of selfishness.

God starts us all in this world with a complete body and a wonderful soul. We have powers to move about ; to touch the lives of others and be touched by them. We have eyes to see the wonders of the world, and hearts to love the people in it ; hearts whose doors are lightly hung, and meant to open easily to let in the need and the sorrow of other folk that we may help them.

Some use all these powers, and grow up daily into the likeness of Christ, and learn that it is better to give than to get ; that sacrifice is better than selfishness, and that to think of others is better than to live for self. But others take the other way, the way of the acorn barnacle.

They think it better to get than to give.



They build up a wall of hard and crusted selfishness between themselves and everybody else. They lose the power of seeing all that is beautiful in the world and in men's lives. They settle down to their greedy task. They give up the words of kindness and become hard-lipped and cruel. Their soul gradually loses its shape of beauty, and just becomes a grasping hand, where there should have been a loving heart; and when the feet of Christ come that way, they are wounded and bleeding, as children's feet which have been cut by the acorn barnacle at the seaside.

There were nations like that in those days of war. While the Allies were making mighty sacrifices, not only for themselves but for the world's freedom, they sat walled off by selfishness, deaf to the cries of pain, blind to the greatness of their chance, insensible of their duty, and only grasped, and grasped, and grasped.

There are people like that. They say, "Business is business," and for them business means grabbing, forgetful altogether that there is their Father's business.

Children there are two ways before you : the way of Christ, which is to give for others, to live for others, and to bear the burdens of others ; and the way of the acorn barnacle, to live for self, to grasp and get, to live walled in selfishness, building by hardness and greed a prison about the soul, which in the end will be its tomb.

The sign of the one is a hand that grasps ; of the other a heart that loves.

Which will you choose ?

## REFLECTING THE LIGHT

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“To give light to them that sit in darkness.”—*St. Luke* i. 79.

IN every town there are houses which face the sunny quarter and others built with their backs to the light.

In many streets there is a sunny side and a shadowed side ; one side where the rooms are full of sunlight, and another side where the rooms never get a gleam of direct sunlight.

The house I once lived in happened to face the wrong way ; its back was to the light, so that two windows got sunlight all day and ten never got any.

My study was on the shadowed side, and no matter how brightly the sun was shining I never got any of it. I wished it was not so, but I couldn't help it. I didn't plan the house, and it couldn't be turned round.

One day I was sitting at my desk. Outside was a day of sunlight, but it did

not shine on me. Suddenly a light flashed in across my desk. It lit up my paper, and rested for a moment. Then it touched my face, then it danced about the walls, like Tinker Bell, the Light Fairy in *Peter Pan*, then it came back to my desk again.

I looked up and across the road in a top window of the house opposite, I saw two laughing boys with a small mirror. I laughed too, for I remembered how I had often done it myself. So have you ; and if any grown-ups read this they will smile, remembering how they also often played the same trick when they were children.

The boys and I became friends over it, and thinking about it, I thought of how long ago a boy was born, called John, whose old father sang a song over him which told of the coming of Christ, and said, "Thou child . . . shalt go before the face of the Lord . . . to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death."

Surely this is what we are all meant to do.

There are people as well as houses with their backs to the light. There are people sitting in the shadow of sorrow ; there are children in the shadow of poverty, and drink and unhappiness ; there are nations on the wrong side of the street, “ the peoples that walk in darkness and dwell in the shadow.”

You are on the sunny side. Your lives are full of the light of love, and comfort, and happiness. The sunlight of God is shining on your faces, and into your homes, and into your hearts.

Our nation has the full light of God’s truth, for “ God has shined into our hearts to give us the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

Why ? Because He loves you better than the others ?

No ! But because he means us to do the same : to shine into other lives, not with our own light, for that is not enough, but with heavenly light. We must first set our faces and lives towards the sunlight of God, and then, just as God has shined his light into our hearts from the face of Christ

Jesus, we must send the light gleaming and glinting into earth's shadowed places.

The sunny side of the street must shine across into the shadowed side.

The nations that sit in the full light of Jesus Christ must send that light by missionaries and prayer to the peoples that walk in darkness. Those whose life is full of happiness and comfort must flash sympathy and help into lives whose days are grey with poverty and hardship, and saddened with sorrow.

There is a beautiful phrase in the Bible—"until the day break and the shadows flee away"; but I don't think it means us to sit in the sunshine and leave others in shadow and *just wait* till "the shadows flee away." We are to chase them away; pierce them through and through with shining shafts of the light of God's love, so that all the world and every heart will be full of light.

So then, boys and girls, see that the mirror of your soul is kept clean and stainless that it may receive God's light, and flash it out into the lives of men.

“Thou child . . . shalt go before the face of the Lord . . . to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.”

## THE GOOD SHEPHERD

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“The good shepherd giveth His life for the sheep.”—  
*St. John x. 11.*

I WONDER if we quite understand all that it means to be a good shepherd !

We are apt to think of a shepherd's life as one that is full of sunshine and gentle, pleasant things.

The ploughman has to drag his feet through the clinging soil of the raw furrows in the sharp winds of early spring. At the end of the day he is weary. The poet says “The ploughman homeward plods his weary way.”

The reaper's work is hard too. His back is bent and his hands are blistered before the harvest is gathered in.

But the Shepherd's way is on the clean grassy slopes, or where the sun shines softly on the glowing heather.

It is a quiet life, with time for long quiet



thought, amid the calling of the sheep, and the song of birds.

So we think, and pictures rather help us to think so, for they mostly show us the good shepherd in dignified flowing robes walking before his sheep, or carrying a little lamb in his arms.

Long ago in France there was a queen who thought these things. She had little cottages built by a lake in her royal park, and she and her courtiers dressed themselves up in silks and satins and high-heeled shoes, and played at being shepherds and shepherdesses. The court painter, Watteau, painted these mock shepherds, and made pretty pictures of them ; but it was all a play. Being a shepherd in earnest is not a play, but a business full of toil and sacrifice and even death itself.

There is a sunny side to the shepherd's life, but there is a shadowed side, and it is the most beautiful.

In the time when the lambs are born, it means ceaseless toil, and nights with little sleep. If snow falls at such a time the shepherd's life is very hard indeed. He

must seek the lambs through the blinding snow-storms, and rescue them from the deep drifts, and sometimes the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep.

One summer I passed along a road in Balquhiddy. The sun bathed everything in warm light, the gorse was in golden bloom, the hawthorn, pink and white, made the air sweet, countless wildflowers gleamed and shone, and up the mountain side sounded the calling of a thousand sheep. It was a day to make you think a shepherd's life a dream of happy quiet peace.

Suddenly the farmer pointed me to a rocky cleft in the hillside: "That's where the shepherd's body was found two years ago," he said.

Then I remembered how that year a terrific snowstorm had swept the Scottish hills. The shepherds went out after the lambs, but one shepherd never came home. They searched the drifts, but not till the snow cleared a week later did they find his body in that deep cleft.

In the blinding snow he had stumbled and fallen, broken and stunned, into the deep

snow. It wrapped him round in a stainless shroud, and his soul was gathered home by the Good Shepherd, for he, like Him, had laid down his life for the sheep.

Now every visitor has the place pointed out to him, and children coming from school, and folk going to church, always see that great scar in the hillside ; and always it is being said, " That is the place where the shepherd laid down his life for the sheep."

They will never forget it, and as often as as they look up and think of it, their hearts will be stirred out of selfishness, and they will be helped to think of that other Good Shepherd Whose wandering foolish sheep we all are.

When Jesus called Himself the Good Shepherd, He was not only thinking of the poetry and peace of the shepherd's life. He thought of the other things. He knew what it meant to be a shepherd, He knew what it meant for Him to be the Shepherd of the souls of men : that it meant sacrifice and suffering and death ; and He said the mark of the Good Shepherd

was just this, that He lays down His life for the sheep.

He laid down His on the Cross outside the city wall ; and when we meet to worship in church, we are like the folk of Balquhiddy who look up to the corrie in the hills. We look up to the place of Jesus' sacrifice. We "survey the wondrous Cross," where the Good Shepherd gave His life for His sheep.

And as often as we do, the brave spirit of sacrifice in us is made stronger, and the cowardly spirit of selfishness is shamed ; and we are helped to love "Him Who loved us and gave His life for us."

That is what worship means. It is going back and looking up to the place of the sacrifice of "that great Shepherd of His sheep, the Lord Jesus."

## THE SHADOW OF SELF

WHAT a strange thing our shadow is ! That other self that goes with us everywhere. Sometimes it seems a sort of playmate, making fun of us, creeping up behind us as we walk along the lighted streets, and bouncing in front as we pass the lamp-posts, and shooting out ahead in a queer caricature of our shape.

We all know the little boy in Stevenson's *Child's Garden of Verses*, who sings :

“ I have a little shadow that goes in and out with me,  
And what can be the use of him is more than I can  
see.”

But he and we have found him a lot of use as a playmate, and, until the gas was put out, found a lot of fun in making shadow shapes on the wall with our hands.

Sometimes people have found more than fun in shadows. They have found help. The Bible tells us how people put their sick in the street so that Peter's shadow

might fall on them ; and we have heard how the wounded soldiers used to kiss the shadow of Florence Nightingale on the wall as the " Lady with the Lamp " passed by their beds.

Astronomers have learned much about the sun from the shadow of the eclipse. When the shadow shoots off the central light, they can see the " Corona," the crown of light flashing far into space on every side. They couldn't see it before because there was too much light. The shadow revealed its glory and crowned the sun, just as the shadow of sorrow shows us the shining glory of faith and sets a crown on Christian life.

Sometimes, however, shadows are a great nuisance. You can't read with your shadow on the book ; you don't want your shadow on the paper when you are writing ; and if you are painting a picture or taking a photograph, you must keep your shadow from spoiling it.

A friend of mine in the Army took a photograph of me in France. I took it home and got it developed, but when it came

out it was half-spoiled by the shadow of my friend. He had forgotten about it and stood with his back square to the light, and half the photograph was blotted out by his shadow.

It was not a good picture of me, but it was a good picture of how we often spoil things by letting the shadow of self fall right across them.

There was a learned Frenchman who set himself to make a book which should be a portrait of Jesus. It was a beautifully written book, but it wasn't Jesus. The shadow of the writer was all over it. He painted Jesus, not as He was in the Gospels, but as he wanted Him to be. It was a beautiful portrait spoiled by a shadow.

Sometimes people spoil their gifts in the same way. They are thinking about themselves all the time, not about making others happy so much as about glorifying themselves.

But when Jesus gave His gift at Cana He didn't let His shadow fall on it. He only thought of others, and no one, but

the servants who drew the water, knew Who the Giver was.

How are we to get rid of this shadow of self?

It is much the same as in taking photographs. If you stand with your back turned to the sun your shadow will fall in front of you and come into the picture to spoil it.

Jesus is the Light of the World, our Sun. If we turn our backs on Him, the shadow of self will spoil all that we do.

But if the Lord is "at our right hand" then the shadow of self will fall to one side. We will see things and do things in His light, and not in our own shadow.



## A CURIOUS CLOCK

I SUPPOSE there never was a boy that did not at some time feel the fascination of clocks. A shop window full of clocks always has people looking in at them. We are all like "Budge" and "Tod" in *Helen's Babies*, we "want to see the wheels go wound." It is not enough to hear the tick and see the time.

Sometimes we see curious and ingenious clocks in jewellers' windows—clocks with balls running in sixty zig-zag seconds from end to end of a seesaw, which tips up and down each minute; clocks in the shape of fans, which open hour by hour until the whole fan is spread out; clocks that are their own pendulums, and so on.

I want to tell the boys and girls who read this page about a clock that I saw in the house of a friend who is interested in curious clocks.

It is a shallow silver plate resting on a wooden base. Round the edge of the plate are carved the hours from one to twelve with the quarters marked in between. The plate is full of water, and in the water floats a little figure of a tortoise, and always the tortoise points to the correct time.

You can pull it away to the other side of the plate ; it will not stay there. Slowly but surely it swings round and makes for the place where it ought to be, and then, as it gets nearer to it, it moves a little quicker and finishes with a little eager rush, as if it was glad to be back at its proper place and busy at its modest task of telling the right time.

Of course, its secret is not very difficult to guess. Hidden in the stand beneath the plate is a clock with a magnet on the hour hand and in the little tortoise is a steel core, which is drawn to the magnet and follows it truly.

It is a very pretty and curious ornament, but I think it is a pretty picture of what our life ought to be.

There are people, like that tortoise : there is nothing brilliant and distinguished about them. They have no great gifts to make people wonder. They perhaps do nothing very striking.

But—and it is a very big “ BUT ”—they are always true to God’s time. You can depend on them. They will always be found at their point of duty and always on time.

When it is the time for sympathy, there they are, ready to help and comfort and cheer. When it is time for sacrifice, there they are punctual and ready to give and to bear and to share. When the hour strikes for worship, you know just where you will find them—in their seat in the church, ready and in time. When it was time to join the church, they came ; when it is time for Holy Communion, they are there. No hour ever comes for work or worship or duty, but finds them punctual and prompt. You can depend on them ; God can depend on them, and that is about the finest thing that can ever be said of anyone.

And what is the secret of it all? It is just, as in the tortoise clock, that they have steel-true hearts—hearts that are loyal to the attraction of an unseen magnet.

And that magnet is Jesus Christ. He said “I will draw all men to me.” Jesus is the greatest magnet, unseen, but drawing men’s hearts to Him. Some resist and refuse to be drawn to Him; but those who feel His attraction and let themselves go, are kept true by that unseen Christ to all the times of God, and every one can depend on them.

How is it to be with you? I know you feel the attraction of Jesus, and sometimes you yield to it, but also sometimes you do not.

Now a clock that is only right on Sundays is not much use, and hearts that are only true to Christ in church are not much use either.

Let this invisible Christ be the master of your heart always, every day and all the day, the whole round of your life. If for a space something sweeps you away,

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get back again at once, repenting that you were away.

Be among the people that can be counted on ; and you cannot be that without Jesus Christ.

## SEEKING AND FINDING

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“ Seek, and ye shall find.”—*St. Luke* xi 9.

SOME years ago some newspapers, to increase their circulation, started “ Treasure Hunts.” They told their readers that a brass disc was hidden in a certain place, which would entitle its finder to a reward. Then they published a story which, week by week, would contain hints and clues, which, if noticed and followed up, would lead to where the disc was hidden. It made a great excitement, and crowds set to work. They did not all find what they looked for, but they all got a lot of exercise and a good deal of fun out of the search.

There is no game like seeking for things, whether it is only “ Hunt the Thimble ” for children, or seeking lost treasure in the sea or some pirates’ island, it is always exciting and full of interest.

Who has not read *Treasure Island*, and

thrilled over Jim Hawkins and Long John Silver ?

There is a game that kind hosts sometimes plan for a children's party. The guests come and are told that somewhere in the house there is a gift hidden for each child. They are to seek until they find. It makes a very happy evening. Nobody can be dull. The joy of seeking and the joy of finding make everybody happy.

I think that is a game that our Heavenly Father planned for His children when He prepared this world for them and sent them into it. He filled it with hidden good things for us to find. And ever since the beginning we have been rummaging the house and finding out the hidden things, getting astonishing glad surprises. We have found coal and iron and metals ; jewels and precious metals and oils ; the secrets of grain and fruit ; the treasures of steam and electricity ; the power of water ; the laws of health, and the uses of things. All these were hidden here by God for us to find ; and it is looking for them that has made man what he is.

And we have not found out half yet. "Seek and ye shall find," Jesus says. "He that seeketh findeth."

Jesus Himself was a seeker. He "came to seek and to save that which was lost"; and His parables and teaching are full of seeking and finding. He liked people that seek until they find: the merchant seeking goodly pearls; that man that knocked at his neighbour's door till he answered; the woman that persisted till the Judge heard her. "The Kingdom of Heaven," He said, is "like treasure hid in a field." He was always looking for that hidden treasure and finding its gold in places and people where no one else expected to find anything. He finds faith in Roman soldiers and heathen women; lost womanhood in the Samaritan woman at the well; generosity in Zacchaeus; courage in Peter; an apostle in a persecutor like St. Paul. And wherever He found He rejoiced. He never found life dull; He was always seeking, always on the look-out.

We often say life is dull. We go away from it to look for the romance of hidden



treasure in books. But Jesus wants us to find it in our own life. All the while we are walking over hidden treasure hid in the field of life. "Seek," He says, "and ye shall find."

Is it true? Yes. We shall not always find what we seek for, or in the shape we expect to find it, but we will always find something, and often something far better than what we were looking for.

Long ago people went off seeking a golden city called El Dorado, and the Fountain of Youth, and the Earthly Paradise. Later, they went seeking the North and South Poles, and the North West Passage. They never found the fabled fountain and the golden city. They never found the earthly paradise, or brought back any news of them. And only at long last did they reach the Poles. It was not the finding but the seeking that mattered most. For they found high courage and splendid endurance and sacrifice. They not only found new lands for their nation but they unveiled for us the treasures that are in the brave heart of man, and made

us richer by knowing what men can do and dare and endure.

Once men tried to discover the secrets of alchemy that would turn lead into gold, and make the Elixir of Youth to turn old men young again. They never found these secrets ; but they found the secrets of chemistry, which have made life happier and healthier and more powerful.

Once they sought by astrology to find the future from the stars. They failed, but they found out the wonders of astronomy ; and now the heavens, more than ever, declare the glory of God.

“ Seek and ye shall find.” God always rewards seekers, most of all those who seek Himself. “ God,” says St. Paul, “ made the world and all that is therein . . . that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might find Him, though He is not far from any one of us.”

He has not only hidden good things for us to find, but He Himself is hardly hidden, and is saying “ Come and find Me.”

Jesus was like that, too. He didn't just tell people who He was. He gave them lots

of hints and helps, and wanted them to find out for themselves. He wants us to be seekers, and seekers after God.

We should come to church seeking. Not just doing what we have often done and expecting just the same things over again ; but seeking treasure. We should read our Bibles like that, and often in passages we know by heart and think we know altogether, we would find some new fine thing we never noticed before.

We should look at people like that, never giving up hope of anyone, but expecting to find real gold of goodness in them at any time.

This is the way to fill life with wonder and interest, so that it cannot ever be dull. Every day is a new country with hidden treasures in it for us to find, things that comfort. To be always seeking God, looking out for Him, is to find Him, in people's hearts, in hard and stony events, like gold in quartz. Even death itself is God saying "Come and find Me," the last quest, the finding of El Dorado, the golden city.

“Seek and ye shall find.” We are to be seekers, not settlers; every seeking finds some reward, for God loves seekers. But there is one seeking which always finds just what it seeks: “If with all your hearts ye truly seek Me, ye shall ever surely find Me,” thus saith your God.

## WITH A MEASURING LINE

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"I lifted up mine eyes again, and looked, and behold a man with a measuring line in his hand."—*Zech* ii. 1.

"A MAN with a measuring line." You have often seen him. Perhaps it was in your own house. He was talking with your father about some things to be done, and then he pulled a rule out of his pocket, unfolded it, and placed it against the wall. He was measuring up the size and cost of the job.

Or you have gone into some great church or cathedral and, as you went about, you saw a man with a note-book and a measure working away by himself. He was a student of architecture, measuring carefully the work, that he might study its design and proportions.

Perhaps in the street or the country you have seen men with a black and white post and a chain and a thing like a telescope on a stand. They are measuring to make

a map, or planning out a road, or a railway line.

Once one of God's prophets, Zechariah, saw a man with a measuring line. He said he was going to measure Jerusalem. It made the prophet think, and his thought was that God also was measuring up Jerusalem.

I want you, too, to think for a little about measuring things. Things have got to be measured. We cannot live without it. So we have to learn tables of measures, lineal, square, cubic, measures of weight and quantity. You cannot cook, or photograph, or build by guess-work and haphazard. Everything must be measured exactly. It would hardly do if a chemist just popped in rough quantities of what the doctor prescribes. He must have very delicate scales. The tailor measures you for your clothes. Father measures your height to see how you are growing. We have clocks to measure time, so that we may know how much we have got to spend. We must keep count of our money to know what we can do with it. We

shall make a sad mess of our life if we do not know how to measure things.

What wonderful things men have measured ! They know the heights of all the mountains and the depths of all the seas, the size of the earth, how heavy it is, the distances of the stars, the girth of the planets, the speed of light and of sound. Everything is measured.

But there are some things that cannot be measured with a measuring line. To know only the size of some things is to know nothing at all. An old poet says quaintly :

“ It is not growing as a tree

In bulk, that makes man better be.”

A German professor once measured the skulls of some natives in Africa, and declared the natives could never be taught anything. In vain the missionary took him to the school workshop and showed him engines they had made ; asked him to see them working them ; asked him to listen to their band. He said obstinately,

“It is no use: I have measured their skulls.”

That was very German. They measured the nations the same stupid way and went to war sure of victory. They had forgotten to measure men's hearts and souls. They had no measure to do it with.

We often measure people by their money, or their house. It is their character that counts, and you cannot measure that by a tape-measure and figures in a bank-book.

Some of the Jews measured Jesus by His village. “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” they said. They thought a little house in a little village must mean a little person. Their measures were wrong. A beautiful picture is not measured by a foot rule. It is its beauty, not its bigness that counts.

Mount Zion was a little hill by lineal measure, but a psalmist, using another measure, sang once that the big mountains of Bashan need not look down on it, for it was really greater than they were, for it was the Holy Hill of God. Palestine is by square measure a very little land, but by



the true measure it is the greatest of all, and the only one that is called the Holy Land. So when we measure men we must use the right sort of measure, and do it kindly, for Jesus says "with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

And when we measure ourselves, it is not only height and weight that matter but how our soul is growing in likeness to Jesus. And to be honest we must not measure ourselves only with ourselves, but God has given us a measure—the "measure of the stature of the perfect man, Jesus Christ." We must measure ourselves by that.

Lastly, I want you to remember that some things cannot be measured at all. You cannot measure Love. How much does your mother love you? "A hundred miles," or "fifty tons" would be a silly answer. You cannot measure love by the yard or the pound. When you say in a letter "heaps of love," you just mean unmeasured love, for love cannot be measured at all. It is just Love.

And if the love of fathers and mothers makes us feel that, the love of God is more wonderful still. What is its measure? When did it begin? When will it ever end? The Bible says, "it passes knowledge," "unsearchable," incalculable, more than we can number, unfathomable. That is how it speaks of the Love of God. It is without measure.

You are the children of that love, and because God loves without measuring His love, we must answer it, not with measured replies, but with the best we know—the best we can—our whole heart.

## ADORNING THE DOCTRINE

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“That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.”—*Titus* ii. 10.

I DON'T suppose boys and girls are interested enough in jewellery to prefer one gem above another ; but the one I think most beautiful is the pearl.

Everyone knows how they grow. Some irritating little particle intrudes into the oyster's life, and it covers it over with fine glistening matter until, out of this ugly troubling thing, there is created a gem fit to grace the neck of a queen.

So it has the beauty not only of a pearl, but of a perfect parable. For this is what forgiveness makes of wrongs men do each other : it changes them into something that adorns the character and adds a new beauty to it.

This is what the Lord Jesus did. There came into His life the Cross and the Crown of Thorns—cruel, ugly, hurtful. He for-

gave His enemies, and now the Crown of Thorns and the Cross are the beautiful ornaments of Jesus. They were meant to disfigure Him and make Him ridiculous ; instead, they adorned Him, and set forth His beauty of soul. To think of Him apart from them is like thinking of a king without his crown, a monarch without his royal jewels.

That is what Jesus did by forgiveness ; it is what He wishes us also to do. And the beauty of the pearl is that it is a parable of this.

But the pearl has another parable for us : it is the secret of keeping its beauty. Pearls must be worn. If they are kept locked away in a drawer, unseen, unused, hoarded like a miser's treasure, their fine lustre becomes dull, their exquisite pure whiteness becomes dim. They need to be in touch with living flesh, and then they not only adorn the wearer, but are themselves adorned.

Some time ago in America there was a case in the Law Courts. A lady had left to her, among other things, a pearl necklace of

great value. It was hers for her lifetime, and afterwards was to go to the next heirs. She kept it in a safe in the bank ; but the next heirs went to law to make her wear the necklace, because the pearls were losing their beauty and value through never being worn. The judge decided that their claim was just, and she was ordered to wear the pearls for three months each year, and police protection was provided in case thieves attacked her.

Now the truths of our Christian faith are like a necklace of pearls. The coming of Christ to earth, His teaching and commandments, His death on the Cross, His rising from the grave, His ascension into Heaven, are the pearls of our faith, pearls of " great price."

But it is not enough just to believe that these things once happened. That is like keeping pearls locked up in a safe. They are meant to make our life beautiful, and they will become worth nothing unless they touch our life every day, and lie next our very heart.

This is what the Bible means when it

tells us to live as Christians, and so "adorn the doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ." They are to adorn us, but we are also to adorn them. They must be worn in our daily life, so that Christ is born again, not in Bethlehem but in us; so that we are "crucified with Christ" to all that is evil and unkind; so that we are "risen with Christ," above selfishness and cherished grudges and peevish resentments, and live on the heavenly level.

Then, just as the warm close contact of a living body keeps the beauty in the pearls, your lives and mine, living one faith, will "adorn the doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ."

## THE SLEEPING HERO

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"Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."—*Eph. v. 14.*

EVERY boy and girl knows the story of the Sleeping Beauty, and how at last the Prince came and wakened her to life. I wonder how many know about the Sleeping Hero. It is a story that comes from Denmark, and the name of the hero is Holger, the Dane.

The Castle of Kronenberg stands on the shores of the Sound and watches the ships going by ; and deep down in a vault of the castle, far underground, sits Holger the Dane, sleeping.

His elbow rests on the stone table, and his head rests on his hand. He has been sleeping there for ages, and his beard has grown right through the table.

The warships as they pass salute the fortress, and the guns of the fortress thunder in reply ; but Holger the Dane

knows that these are the sounds of peace, and when he hears them through his dreams, he only stirs in his chair but does not waken. He knows he is not needed.

But when Denmark is in danger, then he will waken, and strike the table with his iron glove, draw his beard from the shattered stone, and come forth to deliver his country.

Hans Andersen tells us about him, and we are apt to think it is only a fairy tale. But it is more than that.

Holger the Dane is the soul of the nation, quiet under all the peaceful life of every day, but when a great day of danger calls for great effort and sacrifice, that sleeping soul will waken, and live.

I think we can understand that when we remember what happened not so long ago, when our own beloved land was in danger.

People thought our nation had lost its soul; that old folk only cared for money and comfort and quietness, and young folk cared only for pleasure and having "a good time."



They forgot there was deep down in the heart of the nation a sleeping hero that only wanted the right call to waken him to life. And when the guns of war sounded, he wakened, and young men by thousands gave themselves gladly, and went to face danger and death for their country and the right. The hero was not dead but sleeping.

But I want you to read this old Danish legend as the story of your own soul. Deep down in your heart there is a sleeping hero, a sleeping heroine, the royal unawakened possibilities of your nature. And until they are awakened you are not really alive.

This is what Jesus meant when He said : " The time cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear My voice, and they that hear shall live."

He was not thinking of dead folk whose bodies were buried, but of folk who were not buried and who yet were not alive.

But you say, " I am alive." Are you sure ? Perhaps you are only half alive.

A man that is colour blind is dead to the beautiful world of colour. A man that is deaf is dead to the world made beautiful by the sound of voices and the sounds of nature. A man that is tone-deaf is dead to the world of music. The trained ear of a musician hears more in the same music that an ordinary ear listens to. It is all there for everyone to hear, but though all have ears only some have "ears to hear"; only some are really "alive" to all the world of music.

Jesus when he said "the dead," meant the living people who were alive to matters of food and clothing, but not alive to the things of God. "The dead" was the sleeping hero in their soul that He wanted to waken to life.

It is only His voice than can waken the sleeping hero or heroine in your heart.

God needs you. He wants you to be alive; alive to the meaning of life, alive to the Kingdom of God; alive to the good in other people; alive to the chances and powers of your own nature; alive to His presence and love.

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He sent Jesus that we might have life, and life in abundance. When are the hero and heroine in your heart going to hear the voice of Jesus, and live?

## OUR UNSEEN SECOND

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"The Lord stood by him."—*Acts* xxiii. 11.

IN a story of long ago, called the "Song of the Nibelungs," we hear of a great hero, Siegfried, who did many brave and daring deeds.

He slew a terrible dragon and became master of the treasure it guarded, and won the ring that gave its wearer tenfold strength, and the Cap of Mist, which made its wearer invisible.

He was the most true and loyal of friends, and those who had his friendship could always count on him to stand by them in their time of need.

The story tells how once he went to a northern land on a great adventure with his friend Gunther, who sought to win a bride and a kingdom.

Gunther had to undergo a test of strength and skill in leaping, hurling the spear, and throwing a huge stone. If he failed,

his life was to be forfeit, and Siegfried promised to stand by him.

On the morning of the test he missed Siegfried. Thinking he had gone before him, he went to the place of trial, but Siegfried could not be seen, and thinking sadly that his friend had forsaken him, he braced himself up for his great effort.

But as he lifted the spear he felt its weight lightened, as if a strong hand was holding it, and a voice whispered in his ear : “ I am here to stand by you.”

It was Siegfried—unseen, invisible, true to his promise ; and, helped by the strength of this unseen second, Gunther passed his test with triumph, and was strong where others had made failure and found death.

That is only a legend of long ago, a fairy story, a poet’s dream of a true and perfect friend. But dreams sometimes come true, and this one has come true.

There is nothing in the world so good to have as a friend who will stand by you in the hour of need and add his strength to yours, who can always be counted on.

Is there any such friend for you and me ?

There is—and there is a story about Him.

There was a man who called this friend his Lord and Master, and served Him.

In His service he fell into the hands of his foes. He was locked in a prison, and outside were men who had sworn neither to eat nor drink until they had killed him.

Little wonder if he was down-hearted and felt terribly alone. But in the night he says his friend “ *stood by* ” him and said : “ Be of good courage.”

He was sent for trial to Rome, and the ship ran into a storm and was like to founder. Masts and rigging were gone. No one knew where they were, for sun and stars alike were hidden by black clouds and darkness, and all had lost hope.

Then this man alone was brave, and helped them to pluck up their courage, because, he said, in the night his friend “ *stood by* ” him and bade him be of good courage, for all would yet be well.

In time he came to Rome, and at last, on a day, he had to stand before the cruel Emperor Nero, on trial for his life. He had friends, but they were afraid, and he says: "At my first answer no man stood by me. Nevertheless, this friend '*stood by*' me and strengthened me."

That story is in the truest book ever written, for it is in the Bible. The name of the man was Paul, and the name of his Friend who stood by him and gave him strength was Jesus.

We all need such a friend. Often we are afraid because we think no one is standing by us. So when some test comes, we hang back, and keep our tongue between our teeth, not strong enough to do the right and say the right because, "I was the only one."

But when the time comes to stand up for the right we are never left alone. Always the Unseen Friend stands by us, ready to give us strength, if we will trust Him. We never make a bigger mistake than when we think He has left us to stand alone. He always stands by. St.

Paul likes that word "stand-by," and always thought of Jesus as his unseen second in the straits of life, giving him power to play the man.

So should we. He has promised, and has never broken His promise.

And He will give us His own spirit of loyalty to stand by our friends.

Once a Salvation Army lass was brought before the magistrates in Manchester charged with obstructing the traffic. She had been preaching about Jesus, and rough men had made game of her ; and now she stood very forlorn and alone before her judges.

Then one of them, Frank Crossley, came down from the Bench and stood by her side at the bar all through her trial. How grateful and comforted she must have been !

Who taught Frank Crossley to do that ? Jesus. It was the spirit of the Master in His disciple.

Here are two very great things for you and me : to feel that always Jesus will stand by us in trial and temptation and



give us strength to be true ; and that He who stands by us will give us His own chivalrous spirit to stand by the forlorn and the lonely folk.

## LOST BEGINNINGS

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“ With Me from the beginning.”—*St. John* xv. 27.

ONE day I was in a friend's library and he showed me a book.

“ Why ! ” I said, “ it is a first edition of Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley*. It must be very valuable.”

“ Alas ! No,” he replied, “ it would have been if it had been taken care of. But the title-page is gone ! ”

So it was. It was still worth something, but not anything like so much as it would have been but for that missing front page. It was all there but that, and it was the lost beginning that made all the difference.

Eighty-two years ago a traveller called Tischendorff was visiting the monastery at Mount Sinai.

In a waste-paper basket he saw some pages of old Greek writing, and looking at it he found it was a very old version of the Old Testament. Later he got more,

and this was the New Testament. But it was not "complete": a good deal of the beginning was missing.

The monks didn't know what a treasure they had had all the while, and they had used two bucket loads of the beginning to light the fire!

It is the oldest manuscript we have, but the lost pieces are lost for ever. It is a thousand pities, but the monks didn't know until it was too late. They had burnt up the beginning!

I saw at a school prize-giving one day, where there was a show of work, a copy-book very cleanly and carefully written. But it got no prize; the reason was the first page had been torn out.

I asked the boy why the first page was torn out. He said, "I was ashamed of it. It was all blotted."

Had the first page been like the rest, he would have gained a prize, but that happy end didn't happen, and all because of the lost beginning.

How many people's lives are like that:

the beginning is missing. There is something gone that can never be made up.

Perhaps it was just carelessness and want of thought that lost the beginning, like the title-page of *Waverley*.

With some, it is like the book that was found in Mount Sinai, the first years of youth have been burned up, flung into the furnace of foolish pleasures that waste life.

Others have blotted the first pages by some black stain of sin, and blurred all the lines.

All the rest is good, manhood, middle-age, old age, and right up to the end; but for the lost beginning, always regret. Listen to St. Paul: "Salute Andronicus and Junia . . . *who were in Christ before me.*" St. Paul's was a wonderful life, but it had one regret: in the beginning he didn't know Jesus. Afterwards he knew Jesus very well, but he always remembered the years when he might have known Him and didn't, and he thought wistfully of those who were in Christ before him.

I fancy the Prodigal Son must often

have had sad thoughts about the blotted pages and lost beginning of his life.

But you need not. You are at the beginning now: begin now to be a Christian. "Now" is the time to remember your Creator.

Three old men once were talking together about Jesus, and wondering which had known most of Jesus' power to save. One told how he had sinned against God in his youth and Jesus had brought him back to God and manliness.

"Ah," said the other, "the sins of youth are foolishness. It is not so hard to turn and repent in the early years. I was a grown man when I forsook God and it was hard to turn again, but Jesus helped me and brought me back. That is more wonderful."

The third said, "My case is more wonderful still." They listened for some story of terrible sin; but he said, "I never forsook God. I loved Him from the beginning, and Christ has been my friend and Saviour all the way to the end. That is most wonderful."

Now which case is going to be yours ? Is Jesus to be the Saviour of half your life, or of three quarters, or of the whole ?

Is the book of your life to lack its title-page, or is it to be complete "from the beginning" ? Is the copy to be clean from the start ?

A happy new year must be begun at the beginning, a happy life must be begun with Jesus from the beginning.

Don't put off. Don't wait till you are men and women to make friends with Jesus. You will always be sorry you waited. He wants you now ; and you need him now.

The lives that can tell how Jesus was their Saviour from sin have a wonderful story to tell ; but you may have the more wonderful story of how He kept you from sin from the beginning to the end.

It is to such that Jesus says : " Ye also shall bear witness because ye have been with me *from the beginning*."

## THE UNHEARD KNOCK

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“ Behold, I stand at the door, and knock.”—*Rev.* iii. 20.

IT was in the days of the Zeppelin raids. A little boy and his father were looking at the beautiful picture, “ The Light of the World,” in St. Paul’s Cathedral.

The father told the boy what it meant ; how it was a picture of Jesus knocking at the door of the House of Life, and waiting patiently till the door was opened, and how the door must be opened from the inside ; how it was a text made into a picture, and the text was, “ Behold I stand at the door, and knock. If any man hear My voice and open the door I will come in to him.”

The boy looked at it for awhile and then asked, “ Did He get in ? ” “ No,” said the father, “ I don’t think He did.” “ Why ? Couldn’t they hear ? ” “ Yes ! they heard, but I don’t think He got in.”

The boy thought for a little and then said, “ They couldn’t have heard, and I know why : *They were living in the cellar !* ”

Perhaps the boy was right. Sometimes people are living their lives on too low a level to hear Jesus knocking. Some are sunken in sin. They are living in a "sunk flat," as we say. They are living among base things, in "the basement" of the House of Life. Up above Jesus is knocking and calling them to come up on to a higher level, but they are too "low down" to hear.

Business men are living always, it may be, on the business level. Housewives are too absorbed, like Martha, in housework and home affairs, to listen to Jesus' words. Some are living always on the pleasure level. Perhaps some boys and girls are living and playing always in a room called "Self," which is not one of the rooms on the high level.

It's like the old rhyme :

The king was in his counting-house

Counting out his money :

The queen was in her parlour

Eating bread and honey ;

The maid was in the garden

Hanging out the clothes——



and all so taken up with what they were doing, that Jesus knocked at the door of their heart and they never heard Him, left Him waiting patiently, until at last He sorrowfully turned and went away.

Girls and boys, one thing is certain: if we live low down among the base and sunken things of sin, we shall not be able to hear Jesus, and it matters all the world that we should.

And while the other things have got to be done, they ought to be done on the high level, as God's service, with souls that listen for the Master's voice. They should not so swallow us up that we have no ears for Him. For these things are not Life, they are only the means of life, and they don't last. The king will some day get tired of counting out his money: the queen will some day get tired of eating bread and honey. They will long for something else and something better. But alas! if Jesus has knocked so often and waited so long that He has gone away and left them, and they wake up to the sad

knowledge that their life has missed its great chance and its Wonderful Guest.

Boys and girls, I hope your lives will be both busy and happy, but that neither business nor pleasure will so possess you that you can't hear Jesus knocking at the door of your heart ; that you will be as those that watch, and that the door of your heart will quickly and gladly open when Jesus knocks.

## GIVING GOD A CHANCE

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THERE is a little boy I know who says quaint things, and some of them are true as well as quaint.

One day he was with his mother, and she was very anxious about some one whom she loved, and who was very ill. He was sorry for his mother, and like a little man wanted to help her. He didn't like to see her knitted brow, and her eyes full of tears, and hear her heavy sighs. He didn't see how he could help her, but what he said, I think, helped her very much ; for after a while, he said : " Mummy, you're not giving God a chance."

It was quite true. She was trying to do everything herself, forgetting that God had a share in things and that something must be left to Him.

I do not know anything that can help us better to understand what Faith is than this little boy's word.

We think sometimes that it is something difficult to do and hard to understand ; that it means learning doctrines about God, and answering questions in catechisms.

It is none of these things. It is just trusting God to do His share. It is " giving God a chance."

It is what we all do at home with our own fathers and mothers. We leave a lot to them because it's their business, and we know they won't forget, because they are our fathers and mothers and love us dearly.

How strange it would be if children lay awake at nights unable to sleep because they were worrying about whether father had remembered to pay the rent for the house, or whether, perhaps, mother had forgotten to arrange about breakfast !

When you are going off for holiday, you don't fidget about with anxious faces as to whether father has locked up the house and turned off the gas ; whether he has got the tickets, and seen the luggage into the train.

No ! you do your own task, take care

of what he has given into your care and leave him to do his share. Children don't take father's burdens on them, because they are children and they know their father will not fail them. Why? Because he is father.

Now, that is just what Faith in God is. It is being His children, remembering that He is our Father, and "giving Him a chance."

There is a story told of Luther and his wife. Luther was face to face with many troubles, and he was anxious and depressed. His wife tried to cheer him, but could not.

So one day she dressed herself in deepest black, and when Luther came in he found her sitting with a handkerchief to her eyes, apparently in heavy sorrow.

"What is the matter, wife?" he said.

"A new trouble?"

"Ah, yes," she answered. "And the worst of all yet."

"What?"

"Our Father in Heaven is dead!"

Then Luther saw that the eye peeping round the handkerchief was not weeping,

but laughing ; and his heavy-heartedness vanished in a loud laugh. " Quite true," he said, " I've been behaving as if our Heavenly Father was dead."

Girls and boys, remember this. Some day you, too, will be anxious and troubled about something, or about somebody you love very dearly. Be loving and helpful, but remember God loves them too, even better than you do.

However old we grow, we are always God's children. He knows more than we do. He is able to do what we cannot. He doesn't expect children to carry the Father's burdens. He only expects us to do the tasks He sets us and to trust our Father to do His share.

## IN THE EYES OF LOVE

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A LITTLE girl was sitting on her mother's knee. She was very fond of her mother. She called her "her very own mother," and like one who rejoiced in the possession of precious treasures, she was touching, one after the other, the features of her mother's face with her little fingers: her mother's lips, her eyes, her cheeks, her hair.

After a while she said, "Mummy, can I see your heart?"

The mother laughed and said, "I don't know about that, but you can look into my eyes and see if you can see anything."

She climbed up and peered in; and then she cried out gleefully, "I can see your heart, mummy; and there is a wee girl away in there, and it's me!"

Now, of course, she did not see the heart of her mother. She saw only her own reflection in the lens of the eye. But

it was a true thing she said : there was a wee girl in her mother's heart. It was not herself as she was, as anybody else saw her. It was her true self, as her mother dreamed of her, and wanted her to be and prayed for her to become. You are one thing to the world and another thing in your mother's eyes and in your mother's heart.

Before you were born that dream was there, and it will always be there, and it's good for you to know it and remember it. It will help you to become in fact what you are in your mother's faith and hope and love, in her heart.

There is a play called *Peer Gynt*, by the Norwegian poet Ibsen. You have not read it, but you may have heard the music that Grieg wrote for it, and you may know a sad little song called Solveig's Song. *Peer Gynt* was a vain, conceited fellow, with conceited selfish ideas of himself, and he made a sad mess of his life. All this while Solveig, a good woman who loved him, was praying for him. In everybody else's eyes he was just a worthless



fool ; in her eyes he was something different, something good.

At last Peer comes home, shamed and sorry. He had always been selfish and thought that was being "himself" ; he is told he has never been "himself" at all. He asks Solveig where the real Peer Gynt has been—"The man that he was when a thought of God's created him." She tells him that "the real self complete and true," was always, "in my faith, in my hope, and in my love." And at last, because of this, Peer began to be his true self. Like the Prodigal Son, "he came to himself" ; and he had found himself in the heart of love.

Now this is not true only of our mothers' eyes ; it is true of the eyes of God. Could you look into His eyes and into His loving heart, you would see a wee boy, a wee girl, there—God's beautiful thought of you. It was that thought of you that took shape when you were born. "God thought about me, and so I grew," says Baby in George MacDonald's poem. That is true. That is how you are here. You are not an

accident. You are a thought of God taking shape, and it is the thought of a good man, or a good woman.

When Jesus was born into the world, what happened, St. John says in his gospel, was that the thought of God "became flesh," God's thought of love and salvation for the world. You, too, are one of God's thoughts become flesh; and all that happens to you in life is God's hand trying to complete His thought and make it perfect. Whatever you become, whatever you are in men's eyes, or in your own, you are something far better in His eyes. The perfect pattern of you is there, and He is trying to shape you to it. Just as a sculptor making a statue sees not just a misshapen bit of marble, but the beautiful dream he is working out, so your true self is in God's heart.

It was to that Peter appealed when Jesus said "Lovest thou Me?" after he had denied Him. In everybody else's sight and in his own, Peter was a faithless coward. But Jesus knew and Peter knew that Jesus knew, and he said, "Lord,

Thou knowest all things ; Thou knowest that I love Thee." Yes ! Jesus knew. The true Peter was in Jesus' heart, brave and faithful unto death, and the thought of this helped Peter to " come to himself," and the true self to come to pass. So that the Peter who denied Jesus became the Peter who died for Him.

Children there is a beautiful thought of you in your mother's heart. There is a beautiful thought of you in the heart of Jesus, in the heart of God.

Think on it. The thought will help you, and one day mother's dream, God's dream will come true, and you will be your true self.

And any time you begin to forget and doubt, go and look into your mother's eyes, and see the wee boy, the wee girl that sits in her heart. In fact when you have finished reading this, go and have a look.

## THE PATH AND THE PIONEER

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“Thou shalt be called . . . the restorer of paths to dwell in.”—*Isa.* lviii. 12.

IN the southern suburb of the city I live in, the sidewalks are not paved or asphalted, but laid with ashes. This makes quite a pleasant path. But lately the city's roadmen swooped down with carts and picks and shovels and broke up our paths and carted several inches depth away off each.

We did not see why they could not let well alone. But apparently it was not well. The paths were getting too high and had to be “taken down” a bit, which is good both for paths and persons when they get too uppish.

At any rate, it was done, and instead of our nice smooth paths they left us very rough and uncomfortable ways to walk in. The city has fine big steam-rollers to make the roads smooth, but it has none for our sidewalks. If they are ever to be smooth

again and comfortable to walk on, *they have got to be walked smooth* by our feet.

Now it is very interesting to see how these paths are sifting and sorting people out.

One set of people says : " This is horrid ; I don't like it. It's rough on the boots. It's sore on the feet. I get stones in my shoes, walking here. I wish it was smooth again. Let's walk on the road."

So speak the voices of one sort.

The others say, or perhaps only think, " Well, this is uncomfortable walking, but the longer we shirk walking on it the longer it will remain uncomfortable for everybody. If we don't walk it down, somebody else will have to do it. If we all take our share it'll be soon done. If we walk on it, it may be rough for us, but it will be easier for those who follow us. Let's walk on the side-walks."

So speak the voices of the other sort.

I know a man whose wife said to him : " Let's walk on the road." He said : " Let's walk on the path. Somebody will have to do it if we don't."

Now he was a missionary home on holiday.

So the paths will be smooth again some day because of the people who do not shirk the rough walking. But "some day" will not be as soon as it might be because some people take the road and do not take their share in making "the rough places plain."

Thus the paths of our suburb are judging and sifting people ; and *so are the roads of Life.*

Whenever I see someone trudging through the rough stuff, I think of the pioneers who have made the paths of life easier and and smoother for their fellow-men. A "pioneer," in my dictionary, is "one who goes before, preparing the way for others to follow," and the root of the word is the Latin word for "foot." So, "pioneer" really means one who walks down the rough roads with his feet, so that others find it easier.

At the head of all the pioneers I see Jesus Christ, Who has by His suffering made the road of life easier for us and

Who has "gone to prepare a place" for us.

And then I see the men who, at the risk, and often at the loss of their lives, searched out the ocean ways of travel and trade; the men who cleared the way through the dark forests and darker cruelties of Africa and India and great unknown countries; the missionaries who ventured into savage places and among savage peoples in Christ's name and beat down the savagery beneath their feet, and made it safe for others to follow them; the men of science who experimented on their own bodies with chloroform and inoculations and X-rays and radium to find out new ways of healing for their fellow-men; all the brave who went to the War and gave their lives to make the way of peace for those who should come after.

All the mighty company of the pioneers! And in the same company and in the same great march, because they are of the same spirit, a lot of quiet unknown folk, treading down the rough paths in the suburb of a northern town!

When the first pioneers in New England were in the grip of that terrible first winter, their spirits were nearly failing, when a letter from home cheered them with these brave words : “ Count it not grievous that you have been counted worthy to break the ice for others.”

That is the spirit of real Christian life : to try to live so that it will be easier for those who come after us ; to stand up for Jesus, so that it shall be easier for others to stand up for Him ; to trample underfoot the roughnesses and hard things, so that other feet shall walk easily in the path you have made.

And this shall be your reward :

“ Thou shalt be called . . . the restorer of paths to dwell in.”



## HAVE YOU REMEMBERED THE SALT?

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“ Salt is good.”—*St. Mark ix, 50.*

RECENTLY a book came into my hands called *The Week-End Book*. It was full of all sorts of things to make a week-end house-party merry and cheerful; but it is neither of its poetry, nor its songs, nor its games I want to tell you, but of its book-marker. It was a piece of paper and on one side was printed this: “ HAVE YOU REMEMBERED THE SALT ? ”

It was so droll and unexpected that it made me laugh; which I suppose it was meant to do. Then it made me think. It made me think of Someone Who, long ago, in Galilee, told His disciples to remember the salt, and Who used salt as a figure to tell people what religion is. What a splendid figure it is!

Salt is one of the things most necessary to remember, and yet constantly it is forgotten, and it is the most serious of

“ forgets.” All the forethought and work that have gone to make the picnic a success are brought to nothing when you find you’ve forgotten the salt. Everything is spoiled. Things are tasteless, insipid. “ Salt,” said a little boy in his essay, “ is what makes porridge nasty if you don’t put any in ! ”

Life, too, needs salt—the salt of religion—the salt of love to God and love to man for Christ’s sake, of faith and reverence and kindness.

Without it your life may be packed with good things to use and to enjoy ; but it will soon seem insipid. Things will lose their taste. It is people without religion who are always complaining of being “ bored ” and “ fed up.” They have forgotten the salt.

Then think how salt works. By itself it is bitter. A dish that suddenly gives you a mouthful of salt is bad cookery ; and you would not be consoled for six days of food without salt by being presented with a meal of nothing but salt on Sunday. The way salt works is to spread itself

through the whole dish. It disappears. You cannot say : " Here it is," or " There it is," for it is everywhere. Unseen, it is only known in its effects, in the palatableness, the savouriness of the food.

Christian religion ought to be like that. It is not something that you can keep to yourself. Salt by itself is just salt, and religion that keeps to itself is just like salt ; it is bitter and it goes bad. It loses its savour.

It must pervade all we are and all we do ; all day and every day. You cannot leave it out during the week and make up by an extra dose on Sunday. We ought not to be able to say : " This is religion and that is business," or " This is religion and that is pleasure." You ought not to be able to see religion at all, any more than salt ; but simply know it as something that keeps men straight and merciful in business, and boys and girls fair and generous in games and fun ; and helps us to do all things whatever we do in a Christian way.

Then salt is a preservative. Think of

the sea and its service to the world. What ceaseless streams of filthiness and dirt pour into it from our cities, yet it remains wholesome. Were it not for its saltness, I think by this time big as it is, it would have poisoned us all.

And in the same way it is religion that keeps the ocean of life from going utterly bad and rotten. We know how in ancient Rome life went bad, from Nero in his palace down to the poor in the slums. The Christian people who worshipped underground, and who were persecuted, were the salt which saved Rome from destruction and gave new life.

To-day our world has nearly perished, and all sorts of people have all sorts of plans for making a new world. I do not know which is the best plan ; but I know none will succeed unless they "remember the salt."

And when I look at other lands—China torn to pieces by her soldiers ; people that are sitting in darkness in Africa and Asia—I want you to think of them as God's children, as you are, sitting at the table of

life, just as you are. In God's providence it has happened that the salt which saves life is at your end of the table. The gospel of Jesus Christ has come first to you.

Well then—HELP YOURSELF : AND PASS  
THE SALT.

## DAY-DREAMS

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"This dreamer."—*Gen.* xxxvii. 19.

WE are hearing a great deal about dreams to-day. Once people thought, and some think still, that they can find out the truth about the future from our dreams ; some learned men tell us we can find out the truth about ourselves, and that is much more important, for it does not much matter that we should know what will happen in the middle of next week, as that we should know what is happening now in the middle of ourselves, in the depths of our own soul.

So I want to talk about dreams and dreamers, not about our sleeping dreams, but about our waking dreams, our day-dreams, the dreams we dream when we let our thoughts go as they will on the wings of fancy.

The world is not kind to dreamers. Joseph's brethren flung him into a pit and then sold him as a slave, and said : " Now

we will see what will become of his dreams." They did not like Joseph's dreams, for he dreamed of a new state of things where they would have to bow where they had never bowed yet, and show respect to what they had never respected.

Isaiah dreamed of a new world and a Saviour Who should bear the sin of the world ; and they killed Isaiah.

Jesus came dreaming a splendid dream of men and women changed from evil to goodness, of lost sons coming home to God, and the Kingdom of God coming in the world.

And the priests plotted against Jesus, and had Him nailed to a cross. But Joseph's dreams came true ; Isaiah's dream came true ; and the dream of Jesus that He died for is coming true every day.

This is a day in which many dreams are coming true. Twenty years ago men dreamed of flying, and some died for their dream ; to-day men can fly.

Twenty years ago men dreamed of telegraphing without wires ; to-day we sit at home and listen to wireless concerts.

These things have come to pass because first some one dreamed them. Everybody laughed at the dreamers, but the dreams came true. Every great invention was once a dream.

Think what the world owes to its dreamers ! I do not mean only inventors, nor even those whose dreams have given us great poetry, and great books like *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and great music, but the dreamers who dreamed of a better world here. Joan of Arc dreamed a noble dream of liberty for her country, and gave her life to make France free. Mary Slessor dreamed in a factory in Dundee of serving God as a missionary, and what a difference that dream has made to thousands in West Africa ! Livingstone dreamed over his loom at Blantyre, and multitudes in Livingstonia to-day have reason to bless his dream.

There is a poem which says : " Do noble deeds not dream them all day long." But every noble deed was once a dream. Every deed has a dream for its prelude.

I wonder what dreams you girls and boys



are dreaming of your life, what you will be, what you will do ! You will not tell anybody, I expect, but I am sure you are dreaming about something good and brave. Go on dreaming. Do not be ashamed of noble dreams. Go on dreaming, and one day what you are dreaming you will do.

Shakespeare says : " We are such stuff as dreams are made on," and it is true. Dreams have helped to make us what we are.

Before you were a baby in your mother's arms you were a beloved dream in her heart. Waking and sleeping the dream was in her thoughts, and at last it was you. And always she dreams of the man, or the woman she hopes you will be ; and it is a beautiful noble dream, and it is helping you, although you do not know it.

There is Another that dreams about you. It is God. Before you were even a thought in your mother's heart, you were a beautiful dream in the heart of God. That is how you are here at all.

How did it all just come to be you ?  
God *thought* about me, and so I grew.

God wishes His dream of you to come true ; wishes you to be what He meant you to be. He works for it, but sometimes you hinder it. You must work for it, too. And you must dream God's dreams. Dream of our country sober and happy, its dark places made light, its drunkenness and cruelty gone for ever. Dream of a world where there shall be no more war, and all men shall be brothers. Dream of a world without its dark places of heathenism, a world in which Jesus shall reign.

These are God's dreams, and they will come true. Dream always about them, and because they are so splendid you will never let them go as "only dreams," but you will work and pray to help to make them all come true.

## SHUFFLING WITH CONSCIEN

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"Who is on the Lord's side?"—*Exod. xxxii. 26.*

MANY years ago in Scotland there used to be certain days called Fast Days. They were observed just as solemnly as Sundays—shops were closed and work was stopped, and services were held in all the churches.

But the difference between Fast Day and Sunday was that while Sunday was the same day all over the country, the Fast Day was a different day in each parish. It was one date in Edinburgh and another in Glasgow. Two parishes side by side might have different Fast Days.

Now there were two parishes in the west of Scotland, Govan and Cathcart, separated by a stream, and there was a farmer whose farm was partly on one side and partly on the other. No God-fearing farmer would dream of working on the Fast Day, but this man had land in both parishes, and on the Govan Fast Day he

crossed over to his fields in Cathcart, and when the Cathcart day came round he stepped across to his Govan fields, and so managed to work briskly on both days without breaking either !

“ He had land in both parishes.” When it suited he stood on his Govan foot and said “ I am a Govan farmer ” ; but he was equally ready to stand on the Cathcart foot and say, “ I am a Cathcart farmer.” It never occurred to him that he was the same person all the time, and that he was just shuffling with his conscience, and that he could not turn wrong into right as he chose, by jumping backwards and forwards over a burn.

But there are many people like that farmer, trying to have it both ways.

Long ago in the days of Elijah, the people of Israel believed that God could bless their souls, and Baal could bless their bodies, with food and fruits of the earth, and so they worshipped God and asked his blessings ; but also they worshipped Baal and sought his gifts. They wanted “ to have land in both parishes.” Elijah

said: "How long are you going to limp backwards and forwards between two opinions? If Jehovah be God, hear Him; if Baal be God, hear him."

And what he meant was: "You can't do both. You can't serve God with your soul and Baal with your body, for body and soul are one person, and must go one way or the other."

Once in France a prince, who was also a cardinal, swore very profanely, and a good priest checked him.

"Oh!" he said, "I swore not as a cardinal of the Church, but as a prince of France."

"But," said the priest, "when the prince dies what will become of the cardinal?"

In Scotland in 1745 many lairds did not know which side to choose, so they tried to be safe by "having land in both parishes." They sent one son to fight for Prince Charlie, and the other to London to offer his sword to King George.

There is a story of an ignorant old woman who used to bow her head in

church whenever the devil was mentioned in the Bible-reading. When her minister said to her "It is at the name of Jesus every knee should bow," she said: "Oh! yes, I ken that fine, but it's as weel to have friends on both sides!"

Now it is easy to see that the farmer, and the cardinal prince, and the Israelites and the old woman were playing fast and loose with right and wrong, and shuffling with their own consciences. But do we never do anything like that?

There are people who do abroad what they will not do at home, as if right and wrong changed when you cross the Channel or go out East. People who would not go to a theatre on the Lord's Day in England, but who go cheerfully in France. People who live on one level on Sunday and another level all the week. People who divide their life into religion and business; who in church say God is their chiefest good, and in the week forget all about God and chase wholeheartedly after gold.

Boys and girls, it won't do. Our Lord says: "You cannot serve God and gold."

You cannot serve two masters. You are bound to love one better than the other."

You cannot "have land in both parishes," in God's kingdom and in the kingdom of this world. You cannot live across the frontier of right and wrong and keep skipping backwards and forwards. If we choose God we must give up certain things. If we follow Jesus, we must leave behind certain things.

Even if we choose wrong, we are better than trimming between both, for we will find out, like the Prodigal Son, that we have chosen wrongly: but until we choose and stick to one side of the fence, we will shuffle with conscience and persuade ourselves we are clever and successful.

Children, choose, and choose now, and choose God's side. "Follow Me!" says the Lord Christ.

## A PAGE FOR GIRLS

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"His disciples . . . marvelled that He talked with a woman." —*St. John* iv. 27.

THIS is a page for girls, in which I want them to read how much they owe to Jesus Christ, even though they may not yet know Him as their Saviour, even though He may not have seemed to be in their life at all. Just because they have been born into this world girls, they are born in debt to Jesus.

I would like the boys to read it too, because their mother was once a girl, and so they share the debt. Boys, if your mother has meant a very great deal to you, it was Jesus that made it possible.

First look at the world "before Christ."

In Rome once women were honoured, but, as the world before Christ grew old, things were sadly changed. The marriage tie was easily set aside. Women, it was said, counted their age, not by their years,



but by their husbands! One had had fifteen husbands. Cicero divorced his wife because he wanted another with a bigger dowry; Cato divorced his wife so that a friend could marry her; and these were the best of the Romans.

Just think what that meant for children. Anything like what we call "home" was impossible.

In the Greek world things were just as bad. A baby girl was not wanted and would be thrown out to die, or be devoured by the dogs.

There is a kind letter written by a kind husband to his wife in Alexandria. A little baby was coming to their home, and the husband was anxious about his wife. He writes very lovingly and then says, "if it is a boy, keep it and bring it up; but if it is a girl, throw it out."

With the Jews it was better, but still far from well. A man could send his wife away if she had spoiled the dinner, or if he liked someone better; and even to-day in their synagogue prayers the Jewish man says, "I thank Thee that

Thou hast made me a man, and not a woman ” ; and the women say, “ We thank Thee that Thou hast made us such as we are.”

Now none of these things are possible to-day ? Why ? Who made the difference ? It was Jesus. People noticed at once how Jesus treated women. Once the disciples were “ astonished to find Him talking to a woman ! ” Nobody else would have done it. Jesus had women friends, and they were loyal to Him. His words about marriage made the Christian home possible. Your home began to be possible on that day when the disciples were surprised to find Jesus talking to a woman ; and the first part of your debt to Jesus is that you have been born into a world which He changed for girls and women.

Now look at non-Christian lands to-day.

In savage and heathen lands it is common to kill baby girls. Even in China they are not wanted and are sometimes still put out to die. But that is changing. They do not know why, but it is the power of Jesus.

In India widows are no longer allowed to burn themselves on the body of their dead husband as they were once expected to do. The walls of the Zenanas in which wives lived shut up for life, are slowly but surely coming down, and child widows (for a little girl of ten may be a wife and a widow in India), are not so despised and ill-treated as they used to be.

They are like the man in the Bible "who wist not who it was that healed Him," but it was Jesus who healed him, and it is Jesus who is healing them to-day.

In Mohammedan countries much has yet to be done for women. A husband cannot have more than four wives at a time; but he can divorce his wife very easily, and so he can have as many as he likes one after the other.

A traveller once asked an old man in Egypt if he had seen Napoleon. "Oh, yes," he said. "He came in the year I married my seventeenth wife!"

I do not say that even in Christian countries women and girls are always well-treated; but just as there is a great

difference between B.C. and A.D. so even the worst Christian country is a vast deal kinder to women and girls than the best heathen country. In both cases it is Jesus that has made the difference ; and so the second part of your debt is that you were born a girl in a Christian country and not in a heathen or Mohammedan land.

Now, girls, you owe all this to Jesus just because you are girls. He has done all that for girls, and I think the just thing to do is to confess the debt and try to pay Him back with love and obedience and grateful thanksgivings.

But He who has done so much for you because you are girls, can do much more because you are you. I want you to know Him as the Saviour of all girls in the things I have spoken of ; but I want you to know Him also as the Saviour of the girl who is you. He has made the Christian home possible for you. He can also make you into a girl and into a woman worthy of the Christian home, and fit at the last to enter the Father's Heavenly Home.

## THE HELMET OF HECTOR

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LATELY I was reading again one of the oldest and grandest poems in the world. It was the *Iliad*, which tells of the siege of Troy, and the wrath of Achilles, and the death of Hector. Hector was the greatest warrior of the Trojans. They called him "Hector of the glittering helmet," for the sight of his helmet with its towering crest and waving plumes struck terror into the hearts of his enemies.

But once it struck terror into the heart of one who was not an enemy, and that is what I wish to tell you about now.

Hector had come up from the fight, in his grim armour and helmet, whose "crest nodded terribly," and before he went back to the battle he came to see his wife and his little son. She, of course, knew him, but when he "stretched out his arms to the boy, the child shrank crying to the bosom of his fair-girdled nurse, dismayed at his

dear father's aspect, and in dread at the bronze and horse-hair crest that he beheld nodding fiercely from the helmet's top. Then his dear father laughed aloud, and his lady mother ; forthwith glorious Hector took the helmet from his head and laid it all gleaming on the earth ; then he kissed his dear son, and dandled him in his arms."

Isn't that a very pretty and tender picture to be in that old poem with all its blood and battle ? A little lad whose father is fighting for him, afraid of his father's helmet, frightened of his father's armour, and the father taking off his helmet to banish his son's fears and win him to his arms.

It is a picture that grows as you look on it until it is a picture not only of Hector and his child, but of God and His children.

Long ago there was a great deal of terror in man's thoughts about God. Even in the Old Testament, " terrible " is a word constantly used of God.

Far away back, Jacob wakes from a dream at Bethel and says " The Lord was in this place," and he was afraid, and said, " How dreadful is this place ! " " A mighty

God and terrible," says Moses. "Great and terrible," says Nehemiah. A psalm sings, "O God Thou art terrible," and the prophets, too, speak of God as doing terrible things.

Now partly this was because to the Hebrew God was a God of battles. They pictured Him as an armed man, and even though they felt He fought for them, they were terrified before Him, like Hector's child at his father's helmet.

That old world was full of fear. If it thought of His power, His holiness, His all-seeing wisdom, His justice, these were like the terrible plumes of His helmet. They were afraid to trust, they did not dare to believe that He was a loving Father, and they forgot they were His own dear children.

Then Jesus came, and it was easy to trust Him. Nobody was afraid, not even little children ; and when I read in that old poem how Hector laid aside his glorious helmet and took his child in his arms, and then read in the New Testament how God's love came in Jesus, and how He took little



children up in His arms, the one helped me to understand the other.

Jesus is God with all that is terrible laid aside, winning His children by His love and calling them to come to Him—God without His helmet.

The right way to learn about God is to look at Jesus. God is like that. That is God.

There are many thoughts about God that are true and also terrible. They fill us with awe. He is almighty, eternal, holy. He is our Creator, our King, our Judge. These are rather frightening thoughts. They are so big, they bow us down. We dare not approach a king. We fear a judge.

If one begins with these thoughts they may so fill our minds that we never get the length of saying, "Thou art our Father." We are overawed by the majesty of God, afraid of His throne, His crown, His armour of light and might.

But begin at the right beginning. Begin with Jesus. Come to the Father through Him. Look in His face and read love, and pity, and longing to save His children, and know that that is God.



Then the other things will be full of worship and no more terrifying, for the crown is on our Father's head, and the sceptre of power is in our Father's hand, and the rod of justice is moved by a Father's love and not by vengeance.

And if God come to us clothed in the robes of sorrow, we will not be afraid. It is our Father. And when at last He comes in the dark robes of Death to call us away, we will fear no evil. It is our Father calling us to the Father's House. We will always know our Father. Nothing He can wear can hide Him from us once we have learned in Jesus to know the Father.

## LEARNING TO SAY "NO" TO ONESELF

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"If a man will come after me, let him deny himself."  
—*St. Matthew* xvi. 24.

ONCE, when he was lecturing, Lord Haldane told this story of himself. When he was Secretary of State for War, he sent the Secretary of State for Home Affairs a letter requesting something which he said he must have. Very shortly afterwards, this Home Secretary went away for a short holiday, and before he went he asked Lord Haldane to act for him at the Home Office.

Of course he consented to do so; and when he went to the Home Office, the first thing that lay before his eyes on the desk was his own letter, with its demand. He had to answer his own request. He had written it as Secretary for War; now he had to answer it as Home Secretary.

He had to look at it from another point of view. He consulted with the officials,

and he came to see that what seemed so necessary to the Secretary for War was not at all necessary when looked at through the eyes of the Home Secretary. And so he sat down and answered his own letter ; and the man who had written " I must have this," wrote back to himself firmly and finally, " No."

It seems funny a man writing letters to himself, and saying " No " to his own requests. Yet it often happens, and one of the lessons we have all to learn is how to say " No " firmly to ourself. Like Lord Haldane we are two different people at the same time, and the one has something to say to the other.

We read in the Bible how the Prodigal Son "came to himself." Then he said something to himself. Who was this " self " he had met at last ? It was not that person who thought nothing of the father at home, who had taken his money and left him. It was the father's son he met. That was " the self " he came to ; one whom he had forgotten, for he had forgotten he was a son.

And now this other self said to him " Get

up and go back to your father, and say you are sorry and ashamed." It was a good thing that this other better self said this to him at last ; but it would have been better, if at first when he wanted to leave home the son in him had said " No " to himself.

There is in each of us two or more persons. There is a Secretary for War. He is pugnacious and full of self-assertion. What he wants he must have. He doesn't see why he shouldn't. It is his rights he is asking for, and he often asks. His name is " I " ; and the other words he loves to say are " my," " mine," and " me." And it would be all right if there were nobody else, and if he had the world to himself.

But there are others ; he is not only the Secretary for War. He is a bit of a Home in which there are father and mother and brothers and sisters. He must walk over to the Home Office and look at things from that end as well. He must think of the rest of the household, and of the happiness of the home, as well as of his own happiness and then he will learn to be less cocksure and noisy about what he *must* have. He will

learn one of the best lessons of Home—when he learns, as a son and as a brother to say "No" to himself for the sake of others.

The same thing is true if we go outside the home and think of our country. We are not only our own little selfish selves with our own needs and our own point of view, but we are all citizens of a great country, parts of a nation. Every class, every industry and trade, and every citizen must learn to say "No" to its own desires for the sake of others. That is being a good citizen. And most true it is in the Church and kingdom of Christ. "If a man will follow me," said Jesus, "let him deny himself." That is, let him learn to say "No" to himself for the sake of others.

A place in the Bible tells us that Jesus was in Heaven, and might have stayed there in the peace and light of God's presence, but the Saviour said "No" to that, and He came down to live and suffer and die for others.

There is our example. Follow it. The beginning of following Christ is saying "No" to oneself.

When the comfortable chair and the enthralling book make our selfish self say "I'll stay at home this Sunday," the other self says, "No, you won't—for the sake of others."

When the selfish self plans to spend all on himself, the other self says, "No, you won't—for the sake of others."

When the selfish self says, "Bother the heathen and the poor. What have I to do with them? I'll look after myself," the other self says, "No, you won't."

Boys and girls, it is good to listen to that other self, for His name is Jesus.

## HELPFUL HINDRANCES

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"They were forbidden of the Holy Ghost . . . the Spirit suffered them not."—*Acts* xvi. 6, 7.

HINDERING means the flat opposite of helping; yet, strange though it seems, sometimes they are the same thing, and a hindrance is our best help.

A man was once studying for awhile the Emperor Moth.

He watched the moth struggling to break its way out of the cocoon in which it had come to life. The innumerable fine threads of the cocoon meshed it round, and the prisoner was having a hard struggle to go free.

It seemed as if it would be exhausted, and if it got out at all it would be with bruised wings and strength quite spent.

So the man thought he would help the moth, and he quickly slit the cocoon, ended

the struggle, and opened the way to freedom for the Emperor Moth.

But, alas ! something was wrong ! The moth moped, and instead of flying crept about the cage. Its colours never blazed out in their full beauty, but remained dull ; its wings were never spread for flight, but drooped weak and listless, and after a while the moth died.

What had happened ? Why, this : the man who sought to help the moth did it a fatal harm. The Creator of the moth meant the hindrance of the cocoon to be a real help to the moth. It was meant to find its strength by forcing its way through the cocoon. Only so could its wings fit themselves to fly.

The man who thought to help the moth by taking away the hindrance only did it harm. The Creator of the moth, Who knew best, set this hindrance at the beginning of its life because He meant its colours to be glorious and its wings to be strong.

Now the Creator of the moth is also the



Creator of men, and because He wants us to have winged souls that shall mount to Heaven He sets hindrances in our way to help us.

When He was bringing the children of Israel out of Egypt into the Land of Promise, He could have brought them there in a week ; but they would not have been fit to have, and they would not have been able to hold, their new country.

So God surrounded them with the weariness and trials of the desert for forty years. It seemed to them that God was hindering them ; He was really helping them ; for when they at last pushed out of the desert they were a nation of men, who had once been a mob of frightened poor-spirited slaves.

It was the hindrance of the desert that helped them.

When St. Paul set out to tell the people about Jesus, he tells us how he tried one province after another, and everywhere he was hindered. But he pushed on until it became plain that God wished him to preach the good news of Jesus Christ in

Europe. His hindrance in Asia helped him and made him strong for his great task, and when St. Luke came to write the history of his journey long afterwards he understood it, and he wrote, "we tried . . . and the Spirit hindered us."

It is the same with you and me.

If our minds are to become strong and clear and active they must fight their way, like the moth in the cocoon, through the twining bonds of laziness; through the entanglements of arithmetic; through the meshes of grammar. These, and things like that, are the hindrances that stand between us and the mind's land of promise, and if we push through them they make us fit to enter in, and to mount up on wings of strong thought to greater things.

To take away the hindrance is to hurt us, not to help us. To get the answer out of an answer-book; to get the translation out of a crib; to get a good-natured big brother to solve your problems is to leave your

mind like the moth the man helped out of the cocoon, its strength unformed, its brightness unborn, its wings unfit to fly.

Why does God allow us to be met by temptations of all sorts ?

Wouldn't He be a kinder Father if He swept all these things away, and made it easier for us, and helped us ?

That wouldn't be helping us at all ! Our souls are meant to be more beautiful than any moth, to have far stronger wings for far higher flights, and they can only gain their beauty and their strength by beating against these things, until at last they beat through them and rise far above them. So the same God who wraps the cocoon about the moth, because He wishes it to fly strong-winged, sets these hindrances about our souls because He wishes them to " mount up on wings as eagles," and to rise high above the things that are only of this world and on its low level.

Boys and girls, try and remember this, even when the hindrances are hard to bear and hard to understand. It is the task of

Faith and the secret of a happy hopeful life to see behind the hindrances that Father-God, Who through the hindrances is helping us.

## THE-BOY-THAT-WAS-FULL-OF- HIMSELF

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"Because there was no room in the Inn."—*St. Luke* ii. 7.

"He emptied Himself."—*Philippians* ii. 7. (Rev. Ver.)

THE-Boy-Who-was-Full-of-Himself was going to bed. He was just an ordinary sort of boy, cheery, bright-faced, good-natured, and healthy. Only, he was full of himself; and on Christmas Eve he was extra full of himself, and thoroughly happy.

It was late, and the end of an eventful busy day, which had seen the last of his Christmas shopping, and had hardly left him any time to think.

But thoughts sometimes slip in uninvited when one is going to bed.

Family prayers had been very short, for it was so late—and only seven verses had been read which ended—"in a manger: for there was no room for them in the inn."

Somehow these words stuck in his mind,

and brought to his memory some things he had hardly noticed at the time.

Outside a most exciting and fascinating shop a girl selling flags and collecting for wounded soldiers had smiled at him and shaken her box hopefully, for it was Christmas time ; but he had just hurried past. He couldn't think of such things : *he was too full of himself.*

At the tram terminus it was a scramble for the last tram, and he counted himself lucky to nip on just before the conductor said, " No more, please ! full up." He remembered dimly noticing a tired looking woman who turned away with a disappointed look on her face. Now somehow her face was very distinct. But at the time he hardly noticed it : *he was too full of himself.*

At home his mother had said, " Now you will have a lot of new things to-morrow. Won't you look out some of your old toys to send to the treat at the Sick Children's Home ? "

But he had said, " No ! I want them all." He had hardly noticed the sad expression that had flitted into his mother's eyes, but

now it came back and looked at him ; but at the time he was hardly aware of seeing it : *he was too full of himself.*

All the while as he got into bed, and afterwards as well, the words—" in a manger : because there was no room for them in the inn," kept running through his thoughts with a strange persistence.

They were like the rose-leaf in the fairy tale, that wouldn't let the princess sleep. He slept, but as he slept, he dreamed.

He saw Santa Claus come out of the fireplace and get busy with his stocking. Good-looking parcels went in, and very exciting bundles that were too big to go in were laid beside it.

Then Santa Claus stopped, and seemed to think, and said, " Yes ! I think spectacles are needed here. This boy does not see things he ought to see. He is too full of himself." So saying he placed a case on the top of the stocking and was gone, and the bells of his reindeer tinkled away into the night.

The Boy-that-was-Full-of-Himself crept out and seized the top parcel. It was

against the rules, of course, but then when one is too full of oneself, one does break rules, and other things ; and he simply had to see these spectacles.

He got them out and put them on. The walls of the bedroom faded and he began to see all over again the day that was finished, and to see it differently.

He saw the street and the crowds and himself hurrying into the shops. But instead of the girl with the flags, he saw a wounded man. There were marks of old wounds on his hands and scars on his brow. The Boy-that-was-Full-of-Himself saw himself hurry past unheeding, and it seemed as if the wounded hands bled afresh ; and the eyes of the wounded man looked as if all the world's pain was looking out of them ; and His lips moved, and said, " There is still no room for Me. They are full of themselves," and the Boy-that was-Full-of-Himself knew that he had refused the hospitality of his heart to the Christ Who suffers in all the wounds of men.

Again he saw the crowd at the car-terminus, but this time he saw clearly the



face of the woman who might have had his place, if he hadn't been so quick. Just a poor, tired, hard-working woman who had to walk home with her parcels ; but as the Boy-that-was-Full-of-Himself saw her trudging along, he saw that Christ, Who is one with the weary and heavy-laden, tramping wearily along the pavement, once more shut out, walking " because there was no room " in the tram.

Again he heard his mother asking him to give the sick children some share in what he had so much of. He saw the look that had flitted into her eyes, but this time it didn't flit ; it stayed, and looked steadily at the Boy-that-was-Full-of-Himself. Then he knew it was Christ Who looked at him through his mother's eyes ; and through the eyes of the weary woman ; and through the eyes of the wounded man—the Christ Who dwells in little children, and Who suffers with the wounded, and shares the weariness of the heavy-laden.

So the dream passed away.

Morning brought many surprises, as Christmas morning always does.

But the gladdest for the mother was when her little son brought an armful of toys and said, "For the sick children, mummy," and put some money in her hand, and said, "This is for the Crippled Soldiers' Fund."

That was the mother's Christmas joy, and it was a great one, and wisely she asked no questions. And of all the joys that Christmas brought the boy this was the greatest—that the child Jesus was born that day in his heart. There was room for Him, and the boy was no longer the "Boy-that-was-Too-Full-of-Himself."











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